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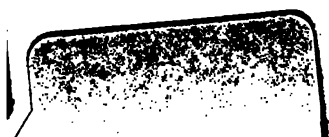
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A COLLECTION  
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INTERESTING TRACTS,  
EXPLAINING  
SEVERAL IMPORTANT POINTS  
OF  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE.

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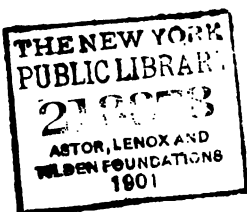


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332





## ADVERTISEMENT.

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SEVERAL of the following Tracts were formerly published in the form of Discipline; but as this undergoes a revision once in four years, the General Conference of 1812 ordered these Tracts to be left out of the Discipline; and, that they might still be within the reach of every reader, directed them to be published in a separate volume. They have been accordingly prepared and published in this form, in a stereotyped edition.

Several new Tracts are included in this volume, and Mr. Wesley's Short Treatise on Baptism is substituted in the place of the extract from Mr. Edwards on that subject. In these Tracts the reader will find the doctrines of Predestination, Election, Reprobation, Final Perseverance, Imputed Righteousness, and Christian Perfection, stated and illustrated in a perspicuous and forcible manner, according to the Scriptural account of these subjects, concerning which the Christian world has been so much divided.

NEW-YORK, *July 5, 1832.*

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## **TRACT I.**

# **P R E D E S T I N A T I O N**

### **CALMLY CONSIDERED.**

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**THAT** to the height of this great argument,  
I may assert eternal providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.—**MILTON.**

1. I AM inclined to believe that many of those who enjoy the faith which worketh by love, may remember some time, when the power of the Highest wrought upon them in an eminent manner; when the voice of the Lord laid the mountains low, brake all the rocks in pieces, and mightily shed abroad his love in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto them. And at that time it is certain they had no power to resist the grace of God. They were then no more able to stop the course of that torrent which carried all before it, than to stem the waves of the sea with their hand, or to stay the sun in the midst of heaven.

2. And the children of God may continually observe, how his love leads them on from faith to faith: with what tenderness he watches over their souls; with what care he brings them back if they go astray, and then upholds their going in his path, that their footsteps may not slide. They cannot but observe how unwilling he is to

let them go from serving him ; and how, notwithstanding the stubbornness of their wills, and the wildness of their passions, he goes on in his work, conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.

3. The farther this work is carried on in their hearts, the more earnestly do they cry out, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give the praise, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake !" The more deeply are they convinced, that "by grace we are saved ; not of works, lest any man should boast : " that we are not pardoned and accepted with God for the sake of any thing we have done, but wholly and solely for the sake of Christ, of what he hath done and suffered for us. The more assuredly likewise do they know that the condition of this acceptance is faith alone ; before which gift of God no good work can be done, none which hath not in it the nature of sin.

4. How easily then may a believer infer, from what he hath experienced in his own soul, that the true grace of God always works irresistibly in every believer ! That God will finish wherever he has begun this work, so that it is impossible for any believer to fall from grace ! And lastly, that the reason why God gives this to some only, and not to others, is because of his own will, without any previous regard either to their faith or works, he hath absolutely, unconditionally predestinated them to life before the foundation of the world !

5. Agreeably hereto, in The Protestant Con-

session of Faith, drawn up at Paris, in the year 1559, we have these words: (Article 12.)

“We believe that out of the general corruption and condemnation in which all men are plunged, God draws those whom, in his eternal and unalterable counsel, he has elected by his own goodness and mercy, through our Lord Jesus Christ, without considering their works, leaving the others in the same corruption and condemnation.”

6. To the same effect speak the Dutch divines assembled at Dort, in the year 1618.—Their words are: (Art. 6, *et seq.*)

“Whereas in process of time, God bestowed faith on some, and not on others, this proceeds from his eternal decree;—according to which, he softens the heart of the elect, and leaveth them that are not elect in their wickedness and hardness.

“And herein is discovered the difference put between men equally lost; that is to say, the decree of election and reprobation.

“Election is the unchangeable decree of God, by which, before the foundation of the world, he hath chosen in Christ unto salvation a set number of men. This election is one and the same of all which are to be saved.

“Not all men are elected, but some not elected; whom God in his unchangeable good pleasure hath decreed to leave in the common misery, and not to bestow saving faith upon them: but leaving them in their own ways, at last to condemn and punish them everlastingly

for their unbelief, and also for their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation."

7. Likewise in The Confession of Faith set forth by the assembly of English and Scotch divines in the year 1646, are these words:— (chap. 3.)

"God from all eternity did unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, without any foresight of faith or good works.

"The rest of mankind God was pleased, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath."

No less express are Mr. Calvin's words, in his *Christian Institutions*, (chap. 21, sect. 1.)

"All men are not created for the same end; but some are foreordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. So according as every man was created for the one end or the other, we say he was elected, that is, predestinated to

life, or reprobated, that is, predestinated to damnation."

8. Indeed there are some who assert the decree of election and not the decree of reprobation. They assert that God hath, by a positive unconditional decree, chosen some to life and salvation; but not that he hath by any such decree devoted the rest of mankind to destruction. These are they to whom I would address myself first. And let me beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to lift up your hearts to him, and to beg of him to free you from all prepossession, from the prejudices even of your tender years, and from whatsoever might hinder the light of God from shining in upon your souls. Let us calmly and fairly weigh these things in the balance of the sanctuary; and let all be done in love and meekness of wisdom, as becomes those who are fighting under one Captain, and who humbly hope they are joint heirs through him of the glory which shall be revealed.

I am verily persuaded that in the uprightness of your hearts you defend the decree of unconditional election; even in the same uprightness wherein you reject and abhor that of unconditional reprobation. But consider, I entreat you, whether you are consistent with yourselves; consider, whether this election can be separate from reprobation; whether one of them does not imply the other, so that in holding one you must hold both.

9. That this was the judgment of those who



had the most deeply considered the nature of these decrees, of the assembly of English and Scotch divines of the Reformed churches, both in France and the Low Countries, and of Mr. Calvin himself, appears from their own words, beyond all possibility of contradiction. "Out of the general corruption (saith the French Church) he draws those whom he hath elected; leaving the others in the same corruption, according to his immovable decree." "By the decree of God, (says the assembly of English and Scotch divines,) some are predestinated unto everlasting life, others foreordained to everlasting death." "God hath once for all (saith Mr. Calvin) appointed, by an eternal and unchangeable decree, to whom he would give salvation, and whom he would devote to destruction:" (*Inst.* cap. 3, sec. 7.) Nay, it is observable, Mr. Calvin speaks with utter contempt and disdain of all who endeavor to separate one from the other, who assert election without reprobation. "Many," says he, "as it were to excuse God, own election, and deny reprobation. But this is quite silly and childish. For election cannot stand without reprobation. Whom God passes by, those he reprobates. It is one and the same thing."—*Inst.* l. 3, c. 23, sect. 1.

10. Perhaps upon deeper consideration you will find yourself of the same judgment. It may be, you also ho'd reprobation, though you know it not. Do not you believe that God, who made "one vessel unto honor," hath made

another unto eternal "dishonor?" Do not you believe that the men who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, were "before ordained of God unto this condemnation?" Do not you think that for "this same purpose God raised Pharaoh up, that he might show his sovereign power in his destruction?" And that "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," refers to their eternal state? Why then, you hold absolute reprobation, and you think Esau and Pharaoh were instances of it, as well as all those vessels made unto "dishonor," those men "before ordained unto condemnation?"

11. To set this matter in a still clearer light, you need only answer one question: Is any man saved who is not elected? Is it possible that any not elected should be saved? If you say, No, you put an end to the doubt. You espouse election and reprobation together. You confirm Mr. Calvin's words, that "without reprobation election itself cannot stand." You allow (though you were not sensible of it before) that "whom God elects not, them he reprobates."

Try whether it be possible, in any particular case, to separate election from reprobation. Take one of those who are supposed not to be elected; one whom God hath not chosen unto life and salvation. Can this man be saved from sin and hell? You answer, "No." Why not? "Because he is not elected. Because God hath unchangeably decreed to save so many souls, and no more; and he is not of that number. Him God hath decreed to pass by; to leave

him to everlasting destruction ; in consequence of which irresistible decree, the man perishes everlastingly." O my brethren, how small is the difference between this and a broad, bare-faced reprobation !

12. Let me entreat you to make this case your own. In the midst of life you are in death, your soul is dead while you live, if you live in sin, if you do not live to God. And who can deliver you from the body of this death ? Only the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. But God hath decreed to give this grace to others only, and not to you ; to leave you in unbelief and spiritual death, and for that unbelief to punish you with death everlasting. Well then mayest thou cry, even till thy throat is dry, "O wretched man that I am !" For an unchangeable, irresistible decree standeth between thee and the very possibility of salvation. Go now and find out how to split the hair, between thy being reprobated and not elected ; how to separate reprobation in its most effectual sense from unconditional election !

13. Acknowledge, then, that you hold reprobation. Avow it in the face of the sun. To be consistent with yourself, you must openly assert that "without reprobation this election cannot stand." You know it cannot. You know if God hath fixed a decree, that these men only shall be saved, in such a decree it is manifestly implied, that all other men shall be damned. If God hath decreed, that this part of mankind, and no more, shall live eternally,

you cannot but see it is therein decreed, that the other part shall never see life. O let us deal ingenuously with each other. What we really hold, let us openly profess. And if reprobation be the truth, it will bear the light, *for the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

14. Now then, without any extenuation on the one hand, or exaggeration on the other, let us look upon this doctrine, call it what you please, naked and in its native color. Before the foundations of the world were laid, God, of his own mere will and pleasure, fixed a decree concerning all the children of men, who should be born unto the end of the world. This decree was unchangeable with regard to God, and irresistible with regard to man. And herein it was ordained, that one part of mankind should be saved from sin and hell, and all the rest left to perish for ever and ever, without help, without hope. That none of these should have that grace, which alone could prevent their dwelling with everlasting burnings, God decreed, for this cause alone, "because it was his good pleasure;" and for this end, "to show forth his glorious power, and his sovereignty over all the earth."

15. Now can you, upon reflection, believe this? Perhaps you will say, "I do not think about it." That will never do. You not only think about it, (though it may be confusedly,) but speak about it too, whenever you speak of unconditional election. You do not think about it! What do you mean? Do you never think about Esau or Pharaoh? Or, in general, about

a certain number of souls, whom alone God hath decreed to save? Why, in that very thought reprobation lurks: it entered your heart the moment that entered. It stays as long as that stays, and you cannot speak that thought, without speaking of reprobation. True, it is covered with fig leaves, so that a heedless eye may not observe it to be there. But if you narrowly observe, unconditional election cannot appear without the cloven foot of reprobation.

16. "But do not the Scriptures speak of election? They say, St. Paul was 'an elected or chosen vessel;' nay, and speak of great numbers of men, as 'elect, according to the foreknowledge of God.' You cannot therefore deny there is such a thing as election. And if there is, what do you mean by it?"

I will tell you, in all plainness and simplicity. I believe it commonly means one of these two things: first, a divine appointment of some particular men to do some particular work in the world. And this election I believe to be not only personal, but absolute and unconditional. Thus Cyrus was elected to rebuild the temple, and St. Paul with the twelve to preach the Gospel. But I do not find this to have any necessary connection with eternal happiness. Nay, it is plain it has not; for one who is elected in this sense, may yet be lost eternally. "Have I not chosen (elected) you twelve?" saith our Lord, "yet one of you hath a devil." Judas, you see, was elected as well as the rest; yet is his lot with the devil and his angels.

17. I believe election means, secondly, a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness. But I believe this election to be conditional, as well as the reprobation opposite thereto. I believe the eternal decree concerning both is expressed in those words: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." And this decree without doubt God will not change, and man cannot resist. According to this, all true *believers* are in Scripture termed elect, as all who continue in *unbelief*, are so long properly *reprobates*, that is, *unapproved* of God, and *without discernment*, touching the things of the Spirit.

18. Now God, to whom all things are present at once, who sees all eternity at one view, "calleth the things that are not, as though they were;" the things that are not yet as though they were now subsisting. Thus he calls *Abraham* "the father of many nations," before even Isaac was born. And thus Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," though he was not slain, in fact, till some thousand years after. In like manner God calleth true believers, "elect from the foundation of the world;" although they were not actually elect or believers till many ages after, in their several generations. Then it only was that they were actually elected, when they were made the sons of God by faith." Then were they in fact, "chosen and taken out of the world; elect," saith St. Paul, "through belief of the truth:" or (as St. Peter expresses it)

“elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit.”

19. This election I as firmly believe as I believe the Scripture to be of God. But unconditional election I cannot believe; not only because I cannot find it in Scripture, but also (to waive all other considerations) because it necessarily implies unconditional reprobation. Find out any election which does not imply reprobation, and I will gladly agree to it. But reprobation I can never agree to, while I believe the Scripture to be of God; as being utterly irreconcilable to the whole scope and tenor both of the Old and New Testaments.

O that God would give me the desire of my heart! That he would grant the thing which I long for! Even that you might now be free and calm, and open to the light of his Spirit! That you would impartially consider how it is possible to reconcile reprobation with the following scriptures:—

Gen. iii, 17, “Because thou hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it—in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” The curse shall come on thee and thine offspring, not because of any absolute decree of mine, but because of thy sin.

Chap. iv, 7, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” Sin only, not the decree of reprobation, hinders thy being accepted.

Deut. vii, 9, “Know that the Lord thy God, he is the faithful God which keepeth covenant

and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him, to their face to destroy them."

Ver. 12, "Wherefore if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant which he sware unto thy fathers."

Chap. xi, 26, 27, 28, "Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God; and a curse if you will not obey."

Chap. xxx, 15, &c. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments—and the Lord thy God shall bless thee. But if thou wilt not hear, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to record this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

2 Chron. xv, 1, &c. "And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, and he said,—The Lord is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

Ezra ix, 13, 14, "After all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses; should we again break thy commandments, would thou not be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us?"



Job xxxvi, 5, "Behold God is mighty, and despiseth not any." Could he then reprobate any?

Psaln cxlv, 9, "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Prov. i, 23, &c. "Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you.

"Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Why? Because of my decree? No. But "because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

Isaiah lxxv, 2, &c. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people;—a people that provoked me to anger continually to my face—Therefore will I measure their former work unto their bosom—Ye shall all bow down to the slaughter, because when I called, ye did not answer—Therefore ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name."

Ezek. xviii, 20, &c. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear (eternally) the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord; and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

Matt. vii, 26, "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand." Nay, he could not help it, if he was ordained thereto.

Chap. xi, 20, &c. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Wo unto thee, Chorazin, wo unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (What, if they were not *elected*? And if they of *Bethsaida* had been *elected*, would they not have repented too?) "Therefore I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

Chap. xii, 41, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is here." But what was this to the purpose, if *the men of Nineveh* were elected, and this *generation* of men were not?

Chap. xiii, 11, 12, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,

but unto them it is not. For whosoever hath (i. e. uses what he hath) to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that he hath."

Chap. xxii, 8, "They which were called were not worthy," were shut out from the marriage of the Lamb; why so? Because "they would not come." Verse 3.

The whole twenty-fifth chapter requires, and will reward your most serious consideration. If you can reconcile unconditional reprobation with this you may reconcile it with the 18th of Ezekiel.

John iii, 19, "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men love (or *choose*) darkness rather than light."

Chap. v, 44, "How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh of God?" Observe the reason why they *could* not believe: it is not in God, but in themselves.

Acts viii, 20, &c. "Thy money perish with thee, (and so doubtless it did)—Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." So that St. Peter had no thought of any absolute reprobation even in the case of Simon Magus.

Rom. i, 20, &c. &c. "They are without excuse; because when they knew God, they glori-

fied him not as God; wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness—who changed the truth of God into a lie—For this cause God gave them up to vile affections—as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”

2 Thess. ii, 10, &c. “Them that perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

20. How will you reconcile reprobation with the following scriptures, which declare God’s willingness that all should be saved?

Matt. xxii, 9, “As many as ye shall find, bid (invite) to the marriage.”

Mark xvi, 15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Luke xix, 41, &c. “And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If (rather *O that*) thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!”

John v, 34, “These things I say that ye may be saved,” viz. those who persecuted him, “and who sought to slay him,” ver. 16, and of whom he complains, ver. 40, “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.”

Acts xvii, 24, &c. “God that made the world and all things therein—giveth to all life, and

breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth—That they should seek the Lord." Observe, this was God's end in creating all nations on all the earth.

Rom. v, 18, "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

Chap. x, ver. 12, "The same Lord over all is rich (in mercy) unto all that call upon him."

1 Tim. ii, 3, 4, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who willeth all men to be saved;" chap. iv, ver. 10, "Who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe," i. e. intentionally of all; and actually of believers.

James i, 5, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."

2 Peter iii, 9, "The Lord is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

1 John iv, 14, "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

21. How will you reconcile reprobation with the following scriptures, which declare that Christ came to save all men, that he died for all, that he atoned for all, even those that finally perish?

Matt. xviii, 11, "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost," without any restriction.

John i, 29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Chap. iii, 17, "God sent his Son into the world, that the world through him might be saved."

Chap. xii, 47, "I came not (now) to judge the world, but to save the world."

Romans, xiv, 15, "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died."

2 Cor. v. 14, &c. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that those (or all) who live, should live unto him which died for them." Here you see, not only that Christ died for all men, but likewise the end of his dying for them.

1 Tim. ii, 6, "Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."

Heb. ii, 9, "We see Jesus made lower than the angels, that he might taste death for every man."

2 Peter ii, 1, "There shall be false teachers among you, who shall privately bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." You see he bought or redeemed even those that perish, that bring upon themselves swift destruction.

1 John ii, 1, 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, (who are elect according to the knowledge of God,) and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"

You are sensible these are but a very small part of the scriptures which might be brought on each of these heads. But they are enough : and they require no comment : taken in their plain, easy, and obvious sense, they abundantly prove, that there is not, cannot be any such thing as unconditional reprobation.

22. But to be a little more particular. How can you possibly reconcile reprobation with those scriptures that declare the justice of God ? To cite one for all.

Ezek. xviii, 2, &c. "What mean ye that ye use this proverb, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge ? As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold all souls are mine : as the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine ;" (and however I may *temporally* visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, yet this visitation extends no farther, but) "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," for its own sin and not another's. "But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right—he shall surely live, saith the Lord God. If he beget a son which is a robber—shall he then live ? He shall not live ; he shall surely die : yet say ye, Why ? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father ?" (Temporally he doth, as in the case of Achan, Korah, and a thousand others : but not eternally.) "When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth it shall die, (shall die the second death.)

The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O Israel, Is not my way equal? (equitable, just.) Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions. So iniquity shall not be your ruin."

Through this whole passage, God is pleased to appeal to man himself, touching the justice of his proceedings. And well might he appeal to our own conscience, according to the account of them which is here given. But it is an account which all the art of man will never reconcile with unconditional reprobation.

23. Do you think it will cut the knot to say, "Why if God might justly have passed by all men, (speak out, if God might *justly* have *reprobated* all men, for it comes to the same point,) then he may justly pass by some. But God might *justly* have passed by all men." Are you sure he might? Where is it written? I



cannot find it in the word of God. Therefore I reject it as a bold precarious assertion, utterly unsupported by holy Scripture.

If you say, "But you know in your own conscience God might justly have passed by you:" I deny it. That God might *justly*, for my unfaithfulness to his grace, have *given me up* long ago, I grant: but this concession supposes me to have had that grace which you say a reprobate never had.

But beside, in making this supposition of what God might have justly done, you suppose his justice might have been separated from his other attributes, from his mercy in particular. But this never was, nor ever will be: nor indeed is it possible it should. All his attributes are inseparably joined: they cannot be divided, not for a moment. Therefore this whole argument stands not only on an unscriptural, but on an absurd, impossible supposition.

24. Do you say, "Nay, but it is just for God to pass by whom he will, because of his sovereignty: for he saith himself, 'May not I do what I will with my own?' And, 'hath not the potter power over his own clay?'" I answer, The former of these sentences stands in the conclusion of that parable, Matt. xx, wherein our Lord reproves the Jews for murmuring at God's giving the same reward to the Gentiles as to them. To one of these murmurers it is that God says, "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Take that thine is, and go thy way. I will give unto this last even as unto thee." Then follows, "Is .

it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?" As if he said, May I not give my own kingdom to whom I please? Art thou angry because I am merciful? It is then undeniably clear, that God does not here assert a right of reprobating every man. Here is nothing spoken of reprobation, bad or good. Here is no kind of reference thereto. This text therefore has nothing to do with the conclusion it was brought to prove.

25. But you add, "Hath not the potter power over his own clay?" Let us consider the context of these words also. They are found in the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Romans; an epistle, the general scope and intent of which is, to publish the eternal, unchangeable *προθεσις*, purpose or decree of God, "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." The justice of God in condemning those that believe not, and the necessity of believing in order to salvation, the apostle proves at large in the three first chapters, which he confirms in the fourth by the example of Abraham. In the former part of the fifth and in the sixth chapter, he describes the happiness and holiness of true believers. (The latter part of the fifth is a digression, concerning the extent of the benefits flowing from the death of Christ.) In the seventh, he shows in what sense believers in Christ are delivered from the law; and describes the miserable bondage of those who are still under the law; that is, who are truly convinced

of sin, but not able to conquer it. In the eighth, he again describes the happy liberty of those who truly believe in Christ : and encourages them to suffer for the faith ; as by other considerations, so by this in particular, “ we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, ver. 28, to them that are called (by the preaching of his word) according to his purpose,” or decree unalterably fixed from eternity, “ he that believeth shall be saved,” “ for whom he did foreknow ” as believing, “ he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ” by his word, (so that term is usually taken in St. Paul’s epistles,) “ and whom he called them he also justified, (the word is here taken in its widest sense, as including sanctification also,) and whom he justified, them he glorified.” Thence to the end of the chapter, he strongly encourages all those who had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, to have a good hope, and no sufferings should ever “ be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.”

26. But as the apostle was aware how deeply the Jews were offended at the whole tenor of his doctrine, and more especially at his asserting, 1. That the Jews themselves could not be saved without believing in Jesus ; and, 2. That the Heathens, by believing in him, might partake of the same salvation : he spends the whole ninth chapter upon them : wherein, 1. He de-

clares the tender love he had for them, verse 1-3. 2. Allows the great national privileges they enjoyed above any people under heaven, verses 4, 5. 3. Answers their grand objection to his doctrine, taken from the justice of God to their fathers, verse 6-13. 4. Removes another objection taken from the justice of God, interweaving all along strong reproofs to the Jews, for priding themselves on those privileges which were owing merely to the good pleasure of God, not to their fathers' goodness any more than their own, verse 14-23. 5. Resumes and proves by Scripture his former assertion, that many Jews would be lost, and many Heathens saved, verse 24-29. And lastly, sums up the general drift of this chapter, and indeed of the whole epistle. "What shall we say then?" What is the conclusion from the whole? The sum of all which has been spoken? Why, that many Gentiles already partake of the great salvation, and many Jews fall short of it. Wherefore? Because they would not receive it by faith. And whosoever believeth not, cannot be saved: whereas, "whosoever believeth" in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, "shall not be ashamed." Verse 30-33.

27. Those words "Hath not the potter power over his own clay?" are part of St. Paul's answer to that objection, that it was unjust for God to show that mercy to the Gentiles which he withheld from his own people. This he first simply denies, saying, God forbid! And then observes, that according to his own words to

Moses, God has a right to fix the terms on which he will show mercy, which neither the will nor the power of man can alter, verses 15, 16; and to withdraw his mercy from them, who, like Pharaoh, will not comply with those terms, verse 17. And that accordingly "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," namely, those that truly believe; "and whom he will," namely, obstinate unbelievers, he suffers to be "hardened."

28. But "why then," say the objectors, "doth he find fault" with those that are hardened? "For who hath resisted his will?" verse 19. To this insolent misconstruction of what he had said, the apostle first gives a severe rebuke, and then adds, "Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou formed me thus?" Why hast thou made me capable of salvation only on those terms? None indeed *hath resisted* this *will* of God, "He that believeth not shall be damned." But is this any ground for arraigning his justice? "Hath not the" great "Potter power over his own clay? to make" or appoint one sort of "vessels," namely, believers "to honor," and the others "to dishonor?" Hath he not a right to distribute eternal honor and dishonor on whatever terms he pleases? Especially, considering the goodness and patience he shows, even toward them that believe not: considering that when they have provoked him "to show his wrath, and to make the power" of his vengeance "known, yet" he "endures with much long-suffering," even those "vessels of wrath," who had before "fitted"

themselves "to destruction." There is then no more room to reply against God, for making his vengeance known to those vessels of wrath, than for making known his glorious love "on the vessels of mercy whom he had before," by faith, "prepared for glory: even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

29. I have spoken more largely than I designed, in order to show, that neither our Lord, in the above-mentioned parable, nor St. Paul, in these words, had any view to God's sovereign power, as the ground of unconditional reprobation. And beware you go no farther therein than you are authorized by them. Take care, when you speak of these high things, to "speak as the oracles of God." And if so, you will never speak of the sovereignty of God, but in conjunction with his other attributes. For the Scripture no where speaks of this single attribute as separate from the rest. Much less does it any where speak of the sovereignty of God, as singly disposing the eternal states of men. No, no: in this awful work, God proceeds according to the known rules of his justice and mercy; but never assigns his sovereignty as the cause why any man is punished with everlasting destruction.

30. Now then, are you not quite out of your way? You are not in the way which God hath revealed. You are putting eternal happiness and misery on an unscriptural, and a very dreadful footing. Make the case your own.

Here are you, a sinner, convinced that you deserve the damnation of hell. Sorrow, therefore, and fear, have filled your heart. And how shall you be comforted? By the promises of God? But perhaps you have no part therein; for they belong only to the elect. By the consideration of his love and tender mercy? But what are they to *you*, if you are a reprobate? God does not love *you* at all: *you*, like Esau, he hath hated even from eternity. What ground then can you have for the least shadow of hope? Why, it is *possible* (that is all) that God's sovereignty will may be on your side: *possibly*, God may save you, because he will! O poor encouragement to despairing sinners! I fear *faith* rarely *cometh by hearing* this!

31. The sovereignty of God is then never to be brought to supersede his justice. And this is the present objection against unconditional reprobation; (the plain consequence of unconditional election;) it flatly contradicts, indeed utterly overthrows, the Scripture account of the justice of God. This has been proved in general already: let us now weigh a few particulars. And, 1. The Scripture describes God as the Judge of the earth. But how shall God in justice judge the world, (O consider this, as in the presence of God, with reverence and godly fear!) how shall God in justice judge the world, if there be any decree of reprobation? On this supposition, what should those on the left hand be condemned for? For their having done evil? They could not help it. There never was a

time when they could have helped it. "God," you say, "of old ordained them to this condemnation." And "who hath resisted his will?" He "sold them," you say, "to work wickedness," even from their mother's womb. He "gave them up to a reprobate mind," or ever they hung upon their mother's breast. Shall he then condemn them for what they could not help? Shall the just, the Holy One of Israel, adjudge millions of men to everlasting pain, because their blood moved in their veins? Nay, this they might have helped by putting an end to their own lives. But could they even thus have escaped from sin? Not without that grace which you suppose God had absolutely determined never to give them. And yet you suppose him to send them into eternal fire for not escaping from sin! That is, in plain terms, for not having that grace which God had decreed they should never have! O strange justice! What a picture do you draw of the Judge of all the earth!

32. Are they not rather condemned for not doing good, according to those solemn words of the great Judge, "Depart, ye cursed; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; a stranger, and ye took me not in; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they answer." But how much better an answer do you put into their mouths! Upon your supposition, might they not say, (O consider it well in meek-



ness and fear!) "Lord, we might have done the outward work; but thou knowest it would have but increased our damnation. We might have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, and covered the naked with a garment; but all these works, without thy special grace, which we never had nor possibly could have, (seeing thou hast eternally decreed to withhold it from us,) would only have been splendid sins. They would only have heated the furnace of hell seven times hotter than before." Upon your supposition, might they not say, "Righteous art thou, O Lord; yet let us plead with thee. O why dost thou condemn us for not doing good? Was it possible for us to do any thing well? Did we ever abuse the power of doing good? We never received it, and that thou knowest. Wilt thou, the Holy One, the Just, condemn us for not doing what we never had the power to do? Wilt thou condemn us for not casting down the stars from heaven? For not holding the winds in our fist? Why, it was as possible for us to do this, as to do any work acceptable in thy sight! O Lord, correct us, but with judgment! And before thou plungest us into everlasting fire, let us know how it was ever possible for us to escape the damnation of hell."

33. Or how could they have escaped (suppose you assign that as the cause of their condemnation) from inward sin, from evil desires, from unholy tempers and vile affections? Were they ever able to deliver their own souls, to rescue themselves from this inward hell? If so,

their not doing it might justly be laid to their charge, and would leave them without excuse. But it was not so; they never were able to deliver their own souls; they never had the power to rescue themselves from the hands of these bosom enemies. This talent was never put into their hands. How then can they be condemned for hiding it in the earth, for non-improvement of what they never had? Who is able to purify a corrupt heart; to bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Is man, mere man, sufficient for this? No, certainly. God alone. To him only can the polluted of heart say, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." But what if he answer, "I will not, because I will not: be thou unclean still!" Will God doom that man to the bottomless pit, because of that uncleanness, which he could not save himself from, and which God could have saved him from, but would not? Verily, were an earthly king to execute such justice as this upon his helpless subjects, it might well be expected that the vengeance of the Lord would soon sweep him from the face of the earth.

34. Perhaps you will say they are not condemned for actual, but for original sin. What do you mean by this term? The inward corruption of our nature? If so, it has been spoken of before. Or do you mean the sin which Adam committed in paradise? That this is imputed to all men, I allow; yea, that by reason hereof, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." But that any will be

damned for this alone, I allow not, till you show me where it is written. Bring me plain proof from Scripture, and I submit; but till then I utterly deny it.

35. Should you not rather say, that unbelief is the damning sin? And that those who are condemned in that day, will be therefore condemned, "because they believed not on the name of the only-begotten Son of God?" But could they believe? Was not this faith both the gift and the work of God in the soul? And was it not a gift which he had eternally decreed never to give them? Was it not a work which he was of old unchangeably determined never to work in their souls? Shall these men be condemned, because God would not work; because they did not receive what God would not give? Could they "ungrasp the hold of his right hand, or force Omnipotence?"

36. There is, over and above, a peculiar difficulty here. You say, Christ did not die for those men. But if so, there was an impossibility in the very nature of the thing, that they should ever savingly believe. For what is saving faith, but "a confidence in God, through Christ that loved me, and gave himself for me?" Loved thee, thou reprobate! Gave himself for thee! Away! Thou hast neither part nor lot herein. Thou believe in Christ, thou accursed spirit! Damned or ever thou wert born! There never was any object for thy faith; there never was any thing for thee to believe. God himself, (thus must you speak, to be consistent with yourself,) with

all his omnipotence, could not make thee believe Christ atoned for thy sins, unless he had made thee believe a lie.

37. If then God be just, there cannot, on your scheme, be any judgment to come. We may add, nor any future state, either of reward or punishment. If there be such a state, God will therein "render to every man according to his works. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

But how is this reconcilable with your scheme? You say, the reprobates cannot but do evil; and that the elect, from the day of God's power, cannot but continue in well doing. You suppose all this is unchangeably decreed; in consequence whereof God acts irresistibly on the one, and Satan on the other. Then it is impossible for either one or the other to help acting as they do; or rather, to help being acted upon, in the manner wherein they are. For if we speak properly, neither the one nor the other can be said to act at all. Can a stone be said to act, when it is thrown out of a sling? or a ball, when it is projected from a cannon? No more can a man be said to act, if he be only moved by a force he cannot resist. But if the case be thus, you leave no room either for reward or punishment. Shall the stone be rewarded for rising from the sling, or punished for falling down?

Shall the cannon ball be rewarded for flying toward the sun, or punished for receding from it? As incapable of either punishment or reward is the man who is supposed to be impelled by a force he cannot resist. Justice can have no place in rewarding or punishing mere machines, driven to and fro by an external force. So that your supposition of God's ordaining from eternity whatsoever should be done to the end of the world; as well as that of God's acting irresistibly in the elect, and Satan's acting irresistibly in the reprobates; utterly overthrows the Scripture doctrine of rewards and punishments, as well as of a judgment to come.

38. Thus ill does that election, which implies reprobation, agree with the Scripture account of God's justice. And does it agree any better with his truth? How will you reconcile it with those plain passages?—"Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live? Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord: wherefore, turn yourselves, and live ye," Ezek. xviii, 23, &c.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii, 11.

39. But perhaps you will say, "These ought

to be limited and explained by other passages of Scripture; wherein this doctrine is as clearly affirmed as it is denied in these." I must answer very plain: if this were true, we must give up all the Scriptures together; nor would the infidels allow the Bible so honorable a title as that of a "cunningly devised fable." But it is not true. It has no color of truth. It is absolutely, notoriously false. To tear up the very roots of reprobation, and of all doctrines that have a necessary connection therewith, God declares in his word these three things, and that explicitly, in so many terms: 1. "Christ died for all," 2 Cor. v, 14, namely, all that were dead in sin, as the words immediately following fix the sense: here is the fact affirmed. 2. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii, 2, even of all those for whom he died: here is the consequence of his dying for all. And, 3. "He died for all, that they should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them," 2 Cor. v, 15, that they might be saved from their sins: here is the design, the end of his dying for them. Now, show me the scriptures wherein God declares in equally express terms, 1. "Christ" did not die "for all," but for some only. 2. Christ is not "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" and, 3. "He" did not die "for all," at least not with that intent, "that they should live unto him who died for them." Show me, I say, the scriptures that affirm these three things in equally express terms. You know there are

none. Nor is it possible to evade the force of those above recited, but by supplying in number what is wanting in weight, by heaping abundance of texts together, whereby (though none of them speak home to the point) the patrons of that opinion dazzle the eyes of the unwary, and quite overlay the understanding both of themselves and those that hear them.

40. To proceed : What an account does this doctrine give of the sincerity of God in a thousand declarations, such as these ?—" O that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever !" Deut. v, 29. My people would not hear my voice, and Israel would not obey me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations. O that my people would have hearkened unto me ! For if Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have put down their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries," Psalm lxxxi, 12, &c. And all this time, you suppose God hath unchangeably ordained that there never should be "such a heart in them !" that it never should be possible for the people whom he thus seemed to lament over, to hearken unto him, or to walk in his ways !

How clear and strong is the reasoning of Dr. Watts on this head !—" It is very hard indeed to vindicate the sincerity of the blessed God or his Son, in their universal offers of grace and salvation to men, and their sending ministers

with such messages and invitations to accept of mercy, if there be not at least a conditional pardon and salvation provided for them.

“His ministers indeed, as they know not the event of things, may be sincere in offering salvation to all persons, according to their general commission, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.’ But how can God or Christ be sincere in sending them with this commission, to offer his grace to all men, if God has not provided such grace for all men, no, not so much as conditionally ?

“It is hard to suppose that the great God, who is truth itself, and faithful in all his dealings, should call upon dying men to trust in a Saviour for eternal life, when this Saviour has not eternal life intrusted with him to give them if they do as he requires. It is hard to conceive how the great Governor of the world can be sincere in inviting sinners, who are on the brink of hell, to cast themselves upon an empty word of invitation, a mere shadow and appearance of support, if there be nothing real to bear them up from those deeps of destruction, nothing but mere words and empty invitations ! Can we think that the righteous and holy God would encourage his ministers to call them to leave and rest the weight of their immortal concerns upon a Gospel, a covenant of grace, a Mediator, and his merit and righteousness ? all which are a mere nothing with regard to them, a heap of empty names, an unsupporting void which cannot uphold them ?”



41. Our blessed Lord does indisputably command and invite "all men every where to repent." He calleth all. He sends his ambassadors, in his name, "to preach the Gospel to every creature." He himself "preached deliverance to the captives," without any hint of restriction or limitation. But now; in what manner do you represent him, while he is employed in this work? You suppose him to be standing at the prison doors, having the keys thereof in his hands, and to be continually inviting the prisoners to come forth, commanding them to accept of that invitation, urging every motive which can possibly induce them to comply with that command; adding the most precious promises, if they obey, the most dreadful threatenings if they obey not; and all this time you suppose him to be unalterably determined in himself never to open the doors for them! even while he is crying, "Come ye, come ye, from that evil place: for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" "Why!" might one of them reply, "because we cannot help it. We cannot help ourselves; and thou wilt not help us. It is not in our power to break the gates of brass, and it is not thy pleasure to open them. *Why will we die!* We must die; because it is not thy will to save us." Alas! my brethren, what kind of sincerity is this, which you ascribe to God our Saviour?

42. So ill do election and reprobation agree with the truth and sincerity of God! But do they not agree least of all with the Scriptural

account of his love and goodness? that attribute which God peculiarly claims, wherein he glories above all the rest. It is not written, "God is justice," or "God is truth:" (although he is just and true in all his ways:) but it is written, "God is love," love in the abstract, without bounds; and "there is no end of his goodness." His love extends even to those who neither love nor fear him. He is good, even to the evil and the unthankful; yea, without any exception or limitation, to all the children of men. For "the Lord is loving" (or good) "to every man, and his mercy is over all his works."

But how is God good or loving to a reprobate, or one that is not elected? (You may choose either term: for if none but the unconditionally elect are saved, it comes precisely to the same thing.) You cannot say, he is an object of the love or goodness of God, with regard to his eternal state, whom he created, says Mr. Calvin plainly and fairly, *in vitæ contumeliam et mortis exitium*, "to live a reproach, and die everlastingly." Surely no one can dream that the goodness of God is at all concerned with this man's eternal state. "However, God is good to him in this world." What! when by reason of God's unchangeable decree, it had been good for this man never to have been born? when his very birth was a curse, not a blessing? "Well, but he now enjoys many of the gifts of God, both gifts of nature and of providence. He has food and raiment, and comforts of various kinds. And are not all

these great blessings?" No, not to him. At the price he is to pay for them, every one of these also is a curse. Every one of these comforts is, by an eternal decree, to cost him a thousand pangs in hell. For every moment's pleasure which he now enjoys, he is to suffer the torments of more than a thousand years; for the smoke of that pit which is preparing for him ascendeth up for ever and ever. God knew this would be the fruit of whatever he should enjoy, before the vapor of life fled away. He designed it should. It was his very purpose, in giving him those enjoyments. So that, by all these, (according to your account,) he is, in truth and reality, only fattening the ox for the slaughter. "Nay, but God gives him grace too." Yes; but what kind of grace? Saving grace, you own, he has none; none of a saving nature. And the common grace he has was not given with any design to save his soul; nor with any design to do him any good at all; but only to restrain him from hurting the elect. So far from doing him good, that this grace also necessarily increases his damnation. "And God knows this," you say, "and designed it should; it was one great end for which he gave it!" Then I desire to know, how is God good or loving to this man, either with regard to time or eternity?

43. Let us suppose a particular instance: here stands a man who is reprobated from all eternity; or, if you would express it more smoothly, one who is not elected, whom God

eternally decreed to pass by. Thou hast nothing therefore to expect from God after death, but to be cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone; God having consigned thy unborn soul to hell, by a decree which cannot pass away. And from the time thou wast born under the irrevocable curse of God, thou canst have no peace. For there is no peace to the wicked; and such thou art doomed to continue, even from thy mother's womb. Accordingly, God giveth thee of this world's goods, on purpose to enhance thy damnation. He giveth thee now substance or friends, in order hereafter to heap the more coals of fire upon thy head. He filleth thee with food, he maketh thee fat and well liking, to make thee a more specious sacrifice to his vengeance. Good nature, generosity, a good understanding, various knowledge, it may be, or eloquence, are the flowers wherewith he adorneth thee, thou poor victim, before thou art brought to the slaughter. Thou hast grace too! but what grace? Not saving grace. That is not for thee, but for the elect only. Thine may properly be termed, damning grace; since it is not only such in the event, but in the intention. Thou receivedst it of God for that very end, that thou mightest receive the greater damnation. It was given, not to convert thee, but only to convince; not to make thee without sin, but without excuse; not to destroy but to arm the worm that never dieth, and to blow up the fire that never shall be quenched.

44. Now, I beseech you to consider calmly,

how is God good or loving to this man? Is not this such love as makes your blood run cold? as causes the ears of him that heareth to tingle? And can you believe there is that man on earth or in hell, who can truly tell God, "Thus hast thou done?" Can you think that the loving, the merciful God, ever dealt thus with any soul which he hath made? But you must and do believe this, if you believe unconditional election. For it holds reprobation in its bosom; they never were, never can be divided. Take then your choice. If, for the sake of election, you will swallow reprobation, well. But if you cannot digest this, you must necessarily give up unconditional election.

45. "But you cannot do this; for then you should be called a Pelagian, an Arminian, and what not." And are you afraid of hard names? Then you have not begun to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. "No, that is not the case. But you are afraid, if you do not hold election, you must hold free will, and so rob God of his glory in man's salvation."

I answer, 1. Many of the greatest maintainers of election utterly deny the consequence, and do not allow, that even natural free will in man is repugnant to God's glory. These accordingly assert, that every man living has a measure of natural free will. So the assembly of divines, (and therein the body of Calvinists both in England and Scotland,) "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that is neither forced, nor, by an absolute necessity of nature,

determined to do good or evil," chap. ix. And this they assert of man in his fallen state, even before he receives the grace of God.

But I do not carry free will so far : (I mean, not in moral things :) natural free will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand : I only assert, that there is a measure of free will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which "enlightens every man that cometh into the world." But indeed, whether this be natural or no, as to your objection it matters not. For that equally lies against both, against any free will of any kind ; your assertion being thus, "If man has any free will, God cannot have the whole glory of his salvation ;" or, "It is not so much for the glory of God, to save man as a free agent, put into a capacity of concurring with his grace on the one hand, and of resisting it on the other ; as to save him in the way of a necessary agent, by a power which he cannot possibly resist."

46. With regard to the former of these assertions, "If man has any free will, then God cannot have the whole glory of his salvation," is your meaning this : "If man has any power to 'work out his own salvation,' then God cannot have the whole glory?" If it be, I must ask again, "What do you mean by God's 'having the whole glory?'" Do you mean, "his doing the whole work, without any concurrence on man's part?" If so, your assertion is, "If man do at all 'work together with God,' in 'working

out his own salvation,' then God does not do the whole work, without man's 'working together with him.' " Most true, most sure : but cannot you see, how God nevertheless may have all the glory ? Why, the very power to " work together with him," was from God. Therefore to him is all the glory. Has not even experience taught you this ? Have you not often felt, in a particular temptation, power either to resist or yield to the grace of God ? And when you have yielded to " work together with him," did you not find it very possible, notwithstanding, to give him all the glory ? So that both experience and Scripture are against you here, and make it clear to every impartial inquirer, that though man has freedom to work or not " work together with God," yet may God have the whole glory of his salvation.

47. If then you say, " We ascribe to God alone the whole glory of our salvation ;" I answer, So do we too. If you add, " Nay, but we affirm, that God alone does the whole work, without man's working at all ;" in one sense, we allow this also. We allow it is the work of God alone to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify ; which three comprehend the whole of salvation. Yet we cannot allow, that man can only resist, and not in any wise " work together with God ;" or that God is so the whole worker of our salvation, as to exclude man's working at all. This I dare not say ; for I cannot prove it by Scripture ; nay, it is flatly contrary thereto ; for the Scripture is express, that (having received power

from God) we are to "work out our own salvation;" and that (after the work of God is begun in our souls) we are "workers together with him."

48. Your objection, proposed in another form, is this: "It is not so much for the glory of God to save man as a free agent, put into a capacity of either concurring with, or resisting, his grace; as to save him in the way of a necessary agent, by a power which he cannot possibly resist."

O that the Lord would answer for himself! that he would arise and maintain his own cause! that he would no longer suffer his servants, few as they are, to weaken one another's hands, and to be wearied not only with the "contradiction of sinners," but even of those who are in a measure saved from sin? "Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech! among them that are enemies to peace! I labor for peace; but when I speak thereof, they still make themselves ready for battle."

49. If it must be, then let us look one another in the face. How is it more for the glory of God to save man irresistibly, than to save him as a free agent, by such grace as he may either concur with or resist? I fear you have a confused, unscriptural notion of "the glory of God." What do you mean by that expression? The glory of God, strictly speaking, is his glorious essence and his attributes, which have been ever of old. And this glory admits of no increase, being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But the Scripture frequently speaks



of the glory of God, in a sense something different from this ; meaning thereby the manifestation of his essential glory, of his eternal power and Godhead, and of his glorious attributes, more especially his justice, mercy, and truth. And it is in this sense alone that the glory of God is said to be advanced by man. Now, then, this is the point which it lies on you to prove : “ That it does more eminently manifest the glorious attributes of God, more especially his justice, mercy, and truth, to save man irresistibly, than to save him by such grace as it is in his power either to concur with, or to resist.”

50. But you must not imagine I will be so unwise as to engage you here on this single point. I shall not now dispute, (which yet might be done,) whether salvation by irresistible grace, (which indeed makes man a mere machine, and, consequently, no more rewardable and punishable,) whether, I say, salvation by irresistible grace, considered apart from its consequences, manifest the glory of God more or less than salvation by grace which may be resisted. Not so ; but by the assistance of God, I shall take your whole scheme together ; irresistible grace for the elect, implying the denial of saving grace to all others ; or unconditional election with its inseparable companion, unconditional reprobation.

The case is clearly this : You may drive me, on the one hand, unless I will contradict myself, or retract my principles, to own a measure of free will in every man ; (though not by nature,

as the assembly of divines;) and, on the other hand, I can drive you, and every asserter of unconditional election, unless you will contradict yourself, or retract your principles, to own unconditional reprobation.

Stand forth, then, free will on the one side, and reprobation on the other; and let us see whether the one scheme, attended with the absurdity, as you think it, of free will, or the other scheme, attended with the absurdity of reprobation, be the more defensible. Let us see (if it please the Father of lights to open the eyes of our understanding) which of these is more for the glory of God, for the display of his glorious attributes, for the manifestation of his wisdom, justice, and mercy, to the sons of men.

51. First, his wisdom. If man be in some measure free; if, by that light which "lighteneth every man that comes into the world," there be "set before him life and death, good and evil;" then how gloriously does the manifold wisdom of God appear in the whole economy of man's salvation! Being willing that all men should be saved, yet not willing to force them thereto; willing that men should be saved, yet not as trees or stones, but as men, as reasonable creatures, endued with understanding to discern what is good, and liberty either to accept or refuse it; how does he suit the whole scheme of his dispensations to this his *προθεσις*, his plan, "the counsel of his will!" His first step is to enlighten the understanding by that general knowledge of good and evil.

To this he adds many secret reproofs, if they act contrary to this light; many inward convictions, which there is not a man on earth who has not often felt. At other times he gently moves their wills, he draws and woos them, as it were, to walk in the light. He instils into their hearts good desires, though perhaps they know not from whence they come. Thus far he proceeds with all the children of men, yea, even with those who have not the knowledge of his written word. But in this what a field of wisdom is displayed, suppose man to be in some degree a free agent! How is every part of it suited to this end! to save man, as man to set life and death before him, and then persuade (not force) him to choose life. According to this grand purpose of God, a perfect rule is first set before him, to serve as a "lantern to his feet, and a light in all his paths." This is offered to him in the form of a law, enforced with the strongest sanctions, the most glorious rewards for them that obey, the severest penalties on them that break it. To reclaim these, God uses all manner of ways; he tries every avenue of their souls. He applies sometimes to their understanding, showing them the folly of their sins; sometimes to their affections, tenderly expostulating with them for their ingratitude, and even condescending to ask, "What could I have done for" you (consistent with my eternal purpose, not to force you) "which I have not done?" He intermixes sometimes threats,—“Except ye repent, ye shall

all likewise perish ;” sometimes promises,—“ Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.” Now, what wisdom is seen in all this, if man may indeed choose life or death ! But if every man be unalterably consigned to heaven or hell before he comes from his mother’s womb, where is the wisdom of this ; of dealing with him, in every respect, as if he were free, when it is no such thing ? What avails, what can this whole dispensation of God avail a reprobate ? What are promises or threats, exhortations or reproofs to thee, thou firebrand of hell ? What, indeed, (O my brethren, suffer me to speak, for I am full of matter !) but empty farce, but mere grimace, sounding words, that mean just nothing ? O where (to waive all other considerations now) is the wisdom of this proceeding ! To what end does all this apparatus serve ? If you say, “ To insure his damnation ;” alas, what needeth that, seeing this was insured before the foundation of the world ! Let all mankind then judge, which of these accounts is more for the glory of God’s wisdom !

52. We come next to his justice. Now, if man be capable of choosing good or evil, then he is a proper object of the justice of God, acquitting or condemning, rewarding or punishing. But otherwise he is not. A mere machine is not capable of being either acquitted or condemned. Justice cannot punish a stone for falling to the ground ; nor, on your scheme, a man for falling into sin. For he can no more help it than the stone, if he be, in your sense,

foreordained to this condemnation. Why does this man sin? "He cannot cease from sin." Why cannot he cease from sin? "Because he has no saving grace." Why has he no saving grace? "Because God, of his own good pleasure, hath eternally decreed not to give it him." Is he then under an unavoidable necessity of sinning? "Yes, as much as a stone is of falling. He never had any more power to cease from evil, than a stone has to hang in the air." And shall this man, for not doing what he never could do, and for doing what he never could avoid, be sentenced to depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? "Yes, because it is the sovereign will of God." Then "you have either found a new God, or made one!" This is not the God of the Christians. Our God is just in all his ways; he reapeth not where he hath not sowed. He requireth only according to what he hath given; and where he hath given little, little is required. The glory of his justice is this, to "reward every man according to his works." Hereby is that glorious attribute shown, evidently set forth before men and angels, in that it is accepted of every man according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not. This is that just decree which cannot pass either in time or in eternity.

Thus one scheme gives the justice of God its full scope, leaves room for it to be largely displayed in all its branches; whereas the other


makes it a mere shadow; yea, brings it absolutely to nothing.

53. Just as gloriously does it display his love; supposing it to be fixed on one in ten of his creatures, (might I not rather say, on one in a hundred?) and to have no regard to the rest. Let the ninety and nine reprobates perish without mercy. It is enough for him, to love and save the one elect. But why will he have mercy on these alone, and leave all those to inevitable destruction? "He will—because he will!" O that God would give unto you who thus speak, meekness of wisdom! Then would I ask, What would the universal voice of mankind pronounce of the man that should act thus? that being able to deliver millions of men from death with a single breath of his mouth, should refuse to save any more than one in a hundred, and say, "I will not, because I will not!" How then do you exalt the mercy of God, when you ascribe such a proceeding to him? What a strange comment is this on his own word, that "his mercy is over all his works!"

Do you think to evade this by saying, "His mercy is more displayed, in irresistibly saving the elect, than it would be in giving the choice of salvation to all men, and actual salvation to those that accepted it?" How so? Make this appear if you can. What proof do you bring of this assertion? I appeal to every impartial mind, whether the reverse be not obviously true; whether the mercy of God would not be far less gloriously displayed, in saving a few by

his irresistible power, and leaving all the rest without help, without hope, to perish everlastingly, than in offering salvation to every creature, actually saving all that consent thereto, and doing for the rest all that infinite wisdom, almighty power, and boundless love can do, without forcing them to be saved, which would be to destroy the very nature that he had given them. I appeal, I say, to every impartial mind, and to your own, if not quite blinded with prejudice, which of these accounts places the mercy of God in the most advantageous light.

54. Perhaps you will say, "But there are other attributes of God, namely, his sovereignty, unchangeableness, and faithfulness. I hope you do not deny these." I answer, No; by no means. The sovereignty of God appears, 1. In fixing from eternity that decree touching the sons of men, "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." 2. In all the general circumstances of creation; in the time, the place, the manner of creating all things; in appointing the number and kinds of creatures, visible and invisible. 3. In allotting the natural endowments of men, these to one, and those to another. 4. In disposing the time, place, and other outward circumstances (as parents, relations) attending the birth of every one. 5. In dispensing the various gifts of his Spirit, for the edification of his church. 6. In ordering all temporal things, as health, fortune, friends, every thing short of eternity. But in disposing the eternal states of men, (allowing only what



was observed under the first article,) it is clear, that not sovereignty alone, but justice, mercy, and truth hold the reins. The Governor of heaven and earth, the I AM, over all, God blessed for ever, takes no step here but as these direct, and prepare the way before his face. This is his eternal and irresistible will, as he hath revealed unto us by his Spirit; declaring, in the strongest terms, adding his oath to his word, and because he could swear by no greater, swearing by himself, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." The death of him that dieth can never be resolved into my pleasure or sovereign will. No; it is impossible. We challenge all mankind to bring one clear, Scriptural proof to the contrary. You can bring no Scripture proof that God ever did, or assertion that he ever will, act as mere sovereign in eternally condemning any soul that ever was or will be born into the world.

55. Now, you are probably thinking of Esau and Pharaoh. Do you then set it down as an unquestionable truth, that these were eternally condemned by the mere sovereign will of God? Are you sure that they were eternally condemned? Even that point is not altogether certain. It is no where asserted in Holy Writ; and it would cost you some pains to prove it. It is true, Pharaoh's death was a punishment from God; but it does not follow that he was punished everlastingly. And if he was, it was not by the mere sovereign will of God, but because of his own stubbornness and impenitence.



Of this Moses has given us a particular account: accordingly we read, "When Pharaoh saw that there was respite," (after he was delivered from the plague of frogs,) "he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them." *Exod. viii, 15.* So after the plague of flies, "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go," verse 32. Again: "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants," *ix, 34.* After God had given him all this space to repent, and had expostulated with him for his obstinate impenitence, in those solemn words, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?" *x, 3*; what wonder is it, if God then "hardened his heart," that is, permitted Satan to harden it? if he at length wholly withdrew his softening grace, and "gave him up to a reprobate mind?"

56. The case of Esau is widely different from this; although his conduct also is blamable in many points. The first was, the selling his birthright to Jacob, *Gen. xxv, 31, &c.* The next, his marrying against his father's consent, *xxvi, 34, 35.* But it is highly probable he was sensible of his fault; because Isaac appears to have been fully reconciled to him when he said, "My son, make me savoury meat, that my soul may bless thee before I die," *xxvii, 4.*

In the following verses we have an account of the manner wherein he was supplanted by his brother Jacob. Upon Isaac's relation of this, "Esau cried with a great and exceeding bitter

cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father!" verse 34. But "he found no place," says the apostle, for repentance," for recovering the blessing, "though he sought it carefully with tears." "Thy brother," said Isaac, "hath taken away thy blessing: I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed." So that all Esau's sorrow and tears could not recover his birthright, and the blessing annexed thereto.

And yet there is great reason to hope, that Esau (as well as Jacob) is now in Abraham's bosom. For although for a time "he hated Jacob," and afterward came against him "with four hundred men," very probably designing to take revenge for the injuries he had sustained; yet we find, when they met, "Esau ran and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him." So thoroughly had God changed his heart! And why should we doubt but that happy change continued?

57. You can ground no solid objection to this on St. Paul's words in the epistle to the Romans: "It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," ix, 12, 13. For it is undeniably plain, that both these scriptures relate not to the persons of Jacob and Esau, but to their descendants; the Israelites sprung from Jacob, and the Edomites sprung from Esau. In this sense only did "the elder" (Esau) "serve the younger;" not in his person, (for Esau never served Jacob,) but in his pos-

terity. The posterity of the elder brother served the posterity of the younger.

The other text referred to by the apostle runs thus "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness," Mal. i, 2, 3. Whose heritage was it that God laid waste? Not that which Esau personally enjoyed; but that of his posterity, the Edomites, for their enormous sins, largely described by several of the prophets. So neither here is there any instance of any man being finally condemned by the mere sovereign will of God.

58. The unchangeableness of God we allow likewise. "In him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." But you seem to lie under a mistake concerning this also, for want of observing the Scripture account of it. The Scripture teaches, 1. That God is unchangeable with regard to his decrees. But what decrees? The same that he has commanded to be preached to every creature: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." The Scripture teaches, 2. That God is unchangeable with regard to his love and hatred. But how? Observe this well; for it is your grand mistake, and the root of almost all the rest. God unchangeably loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity. Unchangeably he loveth faith, and unchangeably hateth unbelief. In consequence hereof he unchangeably loves the righteous, and hateth the workers of iniquity. He unchangeably loves them that believe, and

hates wilful, obstinate unbelievers. So that the Scripture account of God's unchangeableness with regard to his decrees, is this ; he has unchangeably decreed to save holy believers, and to condemn obstinate, impenitent unbelievers. And according to Scripture, his unchangeableness of affection properly and primarily regards tempers and not persons ; and persons (as Enoch, Noah, Abraham) only as those tempers are found in them. Let then the unchangeableness of God be put upon the right foot ; let the Scripture be allowed to fix the objects of it, and it will as soon prove transubstantiation, as unconditional election.

59. The faithfulness of God may be termed a branch of his truth. He will perform what he hath promised. But then let us inquire of the oracles of God, to whom are the promises made ? the promises of life and immortality ? The answer is, " To Abraham and his seed ;" that is, to those who " walk in the steps of that faith of their father Abraham." To those who believe, as believers, are the Gospel promises made. To these hath the faithful God engaged, that he will do what he hath spoken. " He will fulfil his covenant and promise which he hath made to a thousand generations ;" the sum of which is, (as we find it expressly declared by the Spirit of God,) " The Lord will give grace" (more grace) " and glory ; and no good thing will he withhold from them that live a godly life."

60. This covenant of God I understand ; but I have heard of another which I understand not.

I have heard, "that God the Father made a covenant with his Son, before the world began, wherein the Son agreed to suffer such and such things, and the Father to give him such and such souls for a recompense; that in consequence of this, those souls must be saved, and those only, so that all others must be damned." I beseech you, where is this written? In what part of Scripture is this covenant to be found? We may well expect a thing of this moment to be revealed very expressly, with the utmost clearness and solemnity. But where is this done? And if it is not done, if there is no such account in all the Bible, which shall we wonder at most, that any serious man should advance, or that thousands should believe, so strange an assertion, without one plain text of Scripture to support it, from Genesis to the Revelation?

61. I suppose you do not imagine that the bare word *covenant*, if it occurred ever so often in Holy Writ, is a proof of any such covenant as this. The grand covenant which we allow to be mentioned therein is a covenant between God and man, established in the hands of a Mediator, "who tasted death for every man," and thereby purchased it for all the children of men. The tenor of it (so often mentioned already) is this: "Whosoever believeth unto the end, so as to show his faith by his works, I the Lord will reward that soul eternally. But whosoever will not believe, and consequently dieth in his sins, I will punish him with everlasting destruction."

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62. To examine thoroughly whether this covenant between God and man be unconditional or conditional, it may be needful to go back as far as Abraham, the father of the faithful ; to inquire what manner of covenant it was which God made with him ; and whether any reason be assigned of God's peculiarly blessing Abraham, and all the nations of the earth in him.

The first mention of the covenant between God and him, occurs Genesis xv, 18: "The same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land." But this is much more explicitly related in chapter xvii, 1, &c: "The Lord appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face. and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Every man child among you shall be circumcised;—it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. The uncircumcised man child shall be cut off; he hath broken my covenant." So we see, this original covenant, though everlasting, was con-

ditional, and man's failing in the condition cleared God.

63. We have St. Paul's account of this covenant of God with Abraham, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, verse 3, &c: "Abraham," saith he, "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." (This was a little before God established his covenant with him, and is related Genesis xv, 6.) "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision?" (that is, of them that are circumcised) "to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised." Now, if these words do not express a conditional covenant, certainly none can.

64. The nature and ground of this covenant of God with Abraham is farther explained: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him: and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring unto Abraham that which he hath spoken of him," Gen. xviii, 19, &c.

Does God say here, "*I will* do it, because *I will*?" Nothing less. The reason is explicitly

assigned: "All nations shall be blessed in him; for he will command his children, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

The reason is yet more (clearly it cannot, but more) fully set down in the twenty-second chapter, verse 16, &c: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" that is, the Messiah shall spring from thee, "*because* thou hast obeyed my voice."

This is yet again declared: "And the Lord appeared unto Isaac, and said, Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and bless thee: for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father. In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed: *because* that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws," Gen. xxvi, 2, &c.

65. 'This covenant, made to Abraham and his seed, is mentioned again: "And the Lord called unto Moses, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people," Exod. xix, 3, &c.

In the following chapter, God declares the terms of the covenant they were to keep, in ten



commandments. And these themselves are sometimes termed "the covenant," sometimes "the book of the covenant." So, after God had made an end of speaking to the people, it is said, "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning,—and he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses took the blood," (of the burnt-offering,) "and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words," xxiv, 4, &c.

After the people had broken this covenant by worshipping the golden calf, God renews it, Exodus xxxiv, where we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel—and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments," verses 27, 28.

66. According to the tenor of this covenant, made to Abraham and his seed, God afterward declares, "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will establish my covenant with you, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. But if ye will not harken unto me, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant; I will set my face against you, and I will avenge the quarrel of my covenant. Yet if they shall confess their iniquity, and if their

uncircumcised hearts be humbled ; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember," Lev. xxvi, 3, &c. Consequently the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was conditional, as well as that with their posterity.

67. "But is not the faithfulness of God engaged to keep all that now believe from falling away?" I cannot say that. Whatever assurance God may give to particular souls, I find no general promise in Holy Writ, "that none who once believes shall finally fall." Yet, to say the truth, this is so pleasing an opinion, so agreeable to flesh and blood, so suitable to whatever of nature remains in those who have tasted the grace of God, that I see nothing but the mighty power of God which can restrain any who hears it from closing with it. But still it wants one thing to recommend it,—plain, cogent Scripture proof.

Arguments from experience alone will never determine this point. They can only prove thus much, on the one hand, that our Lord is exceeding patient ; that he is peculiarly unwilling any believer should perish ; that he bears long, very long, with all their follies, waiting to be gracious, and to heal their backsliding ; and that he does actually bring back many lost sheep, who, to man's apprehensions, were irrecoverable : but all this does not amount to a convincing proof, that no believer can or does fall from grace. So that this argument, from

experience, will weigh little with those who believe the possibility of falling.

And it will weigh full as little with those who do not; for if you produce ever so many examples of those who were once strong in faith, and are now more abandoned than ever, they will evade it by saying, "O, but they will be brought back; they will not die in their sins." And if they do die in their sins, we come no nearer; we have not gained one point still: for it is easy to say, "They were only hypocrites; they never had true faith." Therefore Scripture alone can determine this question; and Scripture does so fully, determine it, that there needs only to set down a very few texts, with some short reflections upon them.

68. That one who is a true believer, or, in other words, one who is holy or righteous in the judgment of God himself, may nevertheless finally fall from grace, appears, 1. From the word of God by Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die," xviii, 24.

Do you object, "This chapter relates wholly and solely to the Jewish Church and nation?"\* I answer, Prove this. Till then, I shall believe that many parts of it concern all mankind.

If you say, 2. "The righteousness spoken of in this chapter was merely an outward right-

\* See a pamphlet, entitled, "The Doctrine of the Saints' Final Perseverance, Asserted and Vindicated."

eousness, without any inward principle of grace or holiness :” I ask, How is this consistent with the thirty-first verse : “ Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed ; and make you a new heart and a new spirit ?” Is this a “ merely outward righteousness, without any inward principle of grace or holiness ?”

69. Will you add, “ But admitting the person here spoken of to be a truly righteous man, what is here said is only a supposition ?” That I flatly deny. Read over the chapter again ; and you will see the facts there laid down to be not barely supposed, but expressly asserted.

That the death here mentioned is eternal death, appears from the twenty-sixth verse : “ When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them,”—here is temporal death ; “ for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die.” Here is death eternal.

If you assert, “ Both these expressions signify the same thing, and not two different deaths,” you put a palpable force upon the text, in order to make the Holy Ghost speak nonsense.

“ ‘ Dying *in* his iniquity,’ ” you say, “ is the same thing as ‘ dying *for* his iniquity.’ ” Then the text means thus : “ When he dieth in them, he shall die in them.” A very deep discovery !

But you say, “ It cannot be understood of eternal death ; because they might be delivered from it by repentance and reformation.” And

why might they not by such repentance as is mentioned in the thirty-first verse be delivered from eternal death?

"But the whole chapter," you think, "has nothing to do with the spiritual and eternal affairs of men."

I believe every impartial man will think quite the contrary, if he reads calmly either the beginning of it,—“All souls are mine, saith the Lord God; the soul that sinneth it shall die;” where I can by no means allow that by the death of the soul is meant only a temporal affliction; or the conclusion,—“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

It remains then, one who is righteous in the judgment of God himself, may finally fall from grace.

70. Secondly. That one who is endued with the faith which produces a good conscience, may nevertheless finally fall, appears from the words of St. Paul to Timothy: “War a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck,” 1 Tim. i, 18, 19.

Observe, 1. These men had once the faith that produces “a good conscience;” which they once had, or they could not have “put it away.”

Observe, 2. They make shipwreck of the

faith, which necessarily implies the total and final loss of it.

You object : "Nay, the putting away a good conscience does not suppose they had it, but rather that they had it not."

This is really surprising. But how do you prove it? "Why, by Acts xiii, 46, where St. Paul says to the Jews, 'It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you : but seeing ye put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.' Here you see the Jews, who never had the Gospel, are said to put it away."

How ! Are you sure they "never had what they are here said to put away?" Not so : what they put away, it is undeniable, they had, till they put it away ; namely, "the word of God spoken" by Paul and Barnabas. This instance, therefore, makes full against you. It proves just the reverse of what you cited it for.

But you object farther : "Men may have a good conscience, in some sense, without true faith."

I grant it, in a restrained, limited sense ; but not a good conscience, simply and absolutely speaking. But such is that of which the apostle here speaks, and which he exhorts Timothy to "hold fast." Unless you apprehend that the holding it fast likewise "rather supposes he never had it."

"But the faith here mentioned means only the doctrine of faith." I want better proof of this.

It remains, then, one who has the faith which produces a good conscience may yet finally fall.

71. Thirdly. Those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual, invisible church, may nevertheless finally fall.

For thus saith the apostle : " Some of the branches are broken off, and thou art grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Be not high-minded, but fear : if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold the goodness and severity of God ! On them which fell, severity ; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : otherwise thou shalt be cut off," Rom. xi, 17, &c.

We may observe here, 1. The persons spoken to were actually ingrafted into the olive tree.

2. This olive tree is not barely the outward, visible church, but the invisible, consisting of holy believers. So the text : " If the first fruit be holy, the lump is holy ; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." And " because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith."

3. Those holy believers were still liable to be cut off from the invisible church, into which they were then grafted.

4. Here is not the least intimation of their being ever grafted in again.

To this you object, 1. " This olive tree is not the invisible church, but only the outward Gospel church state." You affirm this ; and I prove the contrary ; namely, that it is the invisible

church; for it "consists of holy believers," which none but the invisible church does.

You object, 2. "The Jews who were broken off were never true believers in Christ."

I am not speaking of the Jews, but of those Gentiles who are mentioned in the twenty-second verse; whom St. Paul exhorts to "continue in his goodness;" otherwise, saith he, "thou shalt be cut off." Now, I presume these were true believers in Christ. Yet they were still liable to be cut off.

You assert, 3. "This is only a cutting off from the outward church state." But how is this proved? So forced and unnatural a construction requires some argument to support it.

You say, 4. "There is a strong intimation that they shall be grafted in again." No; not that those Gentiles who did not continue in his goodness should be grafted in after they were once cut off. I cannot find the least intimation of this. "But all Israel shall be saved." I believe they will; but this does not imply the re-ingrafting of these Gentiles.

It remains, then, that those who are grafted into the spiritual, invisible church, may nevertheless finally fall.

72. Fourthly. Those who are branches of Christ, the true vine, may yet finally fall from grace.

For thus saith our blessed Lord himself: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. I am the vine, ye are the



branches. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned," John xv, 1, &c.

Here we may observe, 1. The persons spoken of were in Christ, branches of the true vine.

2. Some of these branches abide not in Christ, but "the Father taketh them away."

3. The branches which "abide not" are "cast forth," cast out from Christ and his church.

4. They are not only "cast forth," but "withered;" consequently, never grafted in again.

5. They are not only "cast forth and withered," but also "cast into the fire." And,

6. "They are burned." It is not possible for words more strongly to declare that those who are branches of the true vine may finally fall.

"But this," you say, furnishes an argument for, not against, the persevering of the saints."

Yes, just such an argument for final perseverance, as the above cited words of St. Paul to Timothy.

But how do you make it out? "Why thus: There are two sorts of branches in Christ the vine; the one fruitful, the other unfruitful. The one are eternally chosen; and these abide in him, and can never withdraw away." Nay, this is the very point to be proved. So that you now immediately and directly beg the question.

"The other sort of branches are such as are in Christ only by profession; who get into churches, and so are reckoned in Christ; and

these in time wither away. These never had any life, grace, or fruitfulness from him."

Surely you do not offer this by way of argument! You are again taking for granted the very point to be proved.

But you will prove that "those are branches in Christ, who never had any life or grace from him, because the churches of Judea and Thessalonica are said to be in Christ, though every individual member was not savingly in him." I deny the consequence; which can never be made good, unless you can prove that those very Jews or Thessalonians who never had any life or grace from him, are nevertheless said by our Lord to be "branches in him."

It remains, that true believers, who are branches of the true vine, may nevertheless finally fall.

73. Fifthly. Those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world, may yet fall back into those pollutions, and perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the Apostle Peter, "If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," (the only possible way of escaping them,) "they are entangled again therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning," 2 Peter ii, 20.

But you say, 1. "Their knowledge was not an experimental knowledge." And how do you prove this? "Because had it been such, they

could not have lost it." You are begging the question again.

You say, 2. "Escaping the pollutions of the world signifies no more than an outward reformation." How prove you that? You aim at no proof at all. But he that will grant it, may.

You say, 3. "These persons never had any change wrought upon them. They were no other than dogs and swine, not only before and after, but even while they outwardly abstained from gross enormities."

I grant, that before and after that time, during which they "escaped the pollutions of the world," (or, as St. Peter words it in his former epistle, "the corruption that is in the world,") they might well be termed either "dogs" or swine," for their gross enormities. But that they deserved such an appellation during that time, I cannot grant without some proof.

It remains, that those who, by the inward knowledge of Christ, have escaped the pollutions of the world may yet fall back into those pollutions, and perish everlastingly.

74. Sixthly. Those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the writer to the Hebrews: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they

fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame," vi, 4-6.

Must not every unprejudiced person see, the expressions here used are so strong and clear, that they cannot, without gross and palpable wresting, be understood of any but true believers?

"But the apostle makes only a supposition, 'If they shall fall away.'"

The apostle makes no supposition at all. There is no *if* in the original. The words are, *Αδυνατον τῆς ἀπαξ φωτισθέντας—καὶ παραπεσον-  
τας*; that is, in plain English, "It is impossible to renew again unto repentance those who were once enlightened and have fallen away."

"No. The words in the original lie literally thus: 'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and they falling away, to renew them again unto repentance;' that is, should they fall away, which is, in plain English, if they fall away."

Excuse me for speaking plain English here. "Shall a man lie for God?" Either you or I do; for I flatly aver, (and let all that understand Greek judge between us,) that the words in the original do not lie literally thus, "and they falling away;" (if so, they must be *καὶ παραπίπτον-  
τας*, in the present tense; not *καὶ παραπεσον-  
τας*, in the indefinite;) but that they are translated, "and have fallen away," as literally as the English tongue will bear.

Therefore here is no *if* in the case, no supposition at all, but a plain declaration of matter of fact.

75. "But why do you imagine these persons were true believers?" Because all the expressions, in their easy, natural sense, imply it.

They "were once enlightened;" an expression familiar with the apostle, and never by him applied to any but believers. So "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward that believe," Eph. i, 17, &c. So again: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv, 6.

"Nay, 'they were enlightened' means only, they were baptized, or knew the doctrines of the Gospel."

I cannot believe this, till you bring me a few passages from St. Paul's writings, wherein that expression is evidently taken in either of these senses.

Again: They "had tasted of the heavenly gift," (emphatically so called,) "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." So St. Peter likewise couples them together: "Be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts ii, 38; whereby the love of God was shed abroad in

their hearts, with all the other fruits of the Spirit.

The expression, "They had tasted of the heavenly gift," is taken from the psalmist, "Taste and see that the Lord is good," *Psa.* xxxiv, 8. As if he had said, Be ye as assured of his love, as of any thing you see with your eyes. And let the assurance thereof be sweet to your soul, as honey is to your tongue.

"But this means only, they had some notions of remission of sins and heaven, and some desires after them; and they had received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost." This you affirm; but without any color of proof.

It remains, that those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

76. Seventhly. Those who live by faith may yet fall from God, and perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the apostle: "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," *Heb.* x, 38. "The just" (the justified person, of whom only this can be said) "shall live by faith" even now shall live the life which is hid with Christ in God; and if he endure unto the end, shall live with God for ever. "But if any man draw back," saith the Lord, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him;" that is, I will utterly cast him off: and accordingly the drawing back here

spoken of, is termed in the verse immediately following, "drawing back to perdition."

"But the person supposed to draw back, is not the same with him that is said to live by faith."

I answer, 1. Who is it then? Can any man draw back from faith who never came to it? But, 2. Had the text been fairly translated, there had been no pretence for this objection. For the original runs thus: *Ο δίκαιος εκ πίστεως ζησεται· και εαν υποσειληται.* If *ο δίκαιος*, "the just man that lives by faith" (so the expression necessarily implies, there being no other nominative to the verb) "draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

"But your translation, too, is inaccurate." Be pleased to show me wherein.

"I grant that he may draw back; and yet not draw back to perdition." But then it is not the drawing back which is here spoken of.

"However, here is only a supposition, which proves no fact." I observe you take that as a general rule, Suppositions prove no facts. But this is not true. They do not always; but many times they do. And whether they do or no in a particular text, must be judged from the nature of the supposition, and from the preceding and following words.

"But the inserting *any man* into the text is agreeable to the grammatical construction of the words." This I totally deny. There is no need of any such insertion. The preceding nominative suffices.

"But one that lives by faith cannot draw back.

For 'whom he justified, them he also glorified.' " This proves no more than, that all who are glorified are pardoned and sanctified first.

"Nay, but St. Paul says, 'Ye are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.' " Most sure, if you endure to the end. "Whosoever believeth in him" to the end "shall never die."

77. "But, to come more home to the point: I say, this text is so far from militating against perseverance, that it greatly establishes it."

You are very unhappy in your choice of texts to establish this doctrine. Two of these establish it, just as this does, as we have seen already. Now, pray let us hear how you prove perseverance from this text.

"Very easily. Here are two sorts of persons mentioned; he that lives by faith and he that draws back to perdition."

Nay, this is the very question. I do not allow that two persons are mentioned in the text. I have shown it is one and the same person, who once lived by faith, and afterward draws back.

Yet thus much I allow: two sorts of believers are in the next verse mentioned; some that draw back, and some that persevere. And I allow, the apostle adds, "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition." But what will you infer from thence? This is so far from contradicting what has been observed before, that it manifestly confirms it. It is a farther proof,



that there are those who draw back unto perdition, although these were not of that number.

"I must still aver, that the text is rightly translated; which I prove thus:—

"The original text runs thus: 'Behold, his soul who is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith,' Hab. ii, 4.

"This the Seventy render, *Εαν υποστειληται, οκ ευδοκει η ψυχη μου εν αυτω· ο δε δικαιος εκ πισθως μου ζησεται*, 'If a man draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But the just shall live by my faith;' that is, faith in me.

"Now, here the man, in the former clause, who 'draws back,' is distinguished from him, in the following clause, who lives by faith.

"But the apostle quotes the text from this translation."

True; but he does not "distinguish the man in the former clause who 'draws back,' from him, in the latter, who 'lives by faith.'" So far from it, that he quite inverts the order of the sentence, placing the latter clause of it first. And by this means it comes to pass, that although, in translating this text from the Septuagint, we must insert "a man," (because there is no nominat. <sup>a</sup> preceding,) yet in translating it from the apost. there is no need or pretence for inserting it, seeing ο δικαιος stands just before.

Therefore, such an insertion is a palpable violence to the text; which, consequently, is not rightly translated.

It remains, that those who live by faith may yet fall from God. and perish everlastingly.

78. Eighthly. Those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant may so fall as to perish everlastingly.

For thus again saith the apostle : " If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing ?"

It is undeniably plain, 1. That the person mentioned here was once sanctified by the blood of the covenant. 2. That he afterward, by known, wilful sin, trod under foot the Son of God. And, 3. That he hereby incurred a sorer punishment than death ; namely, death everlasting.

" Nay, the immediate antecedent to the relative ' he,' is the Son of God. Therefore it was He, not the apostate, who was sanctified (set apart for his priestly office) by the blood of the covenant."

Either you forgot to look at the original, or your memory fails. The Son of God is not the immediate antecedent to the relative " he." The words run thus : " Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God ? καὶ το

*αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης κοινον ἡγησάμενος, ἐν φηγιασθῇ.*  
 You see *ἡγησάμενος*, not *νίος*, is the immediate antecedent to the relative "he." Consequently, it is the apostate, not the Son of God, who is here said to be sanctified.

"If he was sanctified, yet this cannot be understood of inward sanctification. Therefore it must mean, either that he said he was sanctified, or that he made an outward profession of religion."

Why cannot the word be understood in its proper, natural sense, of inward sanctification?

"Because that is by the Spirit of God." From this very consideration it appears, that this must be understood of inward sanctification; for the words immediately following are, "and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace," even that grace whereby he was once sanctified.

It remains that those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant may yet perish everlastingly.

79. If you imagine these texts are not sufficient to prove that a true believer may finally fall, I will offer a few more to your consideration, which I would beg you to weigh farther at your leisure:—

"Ye," Christians "are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men," Matt. v, 13. "When the unclean spirit goeth out of a man," (as he does out of every true believer,) "he walketh through dry

places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return : and he taketh with him seven other spirits ; and they enter in, and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first," xii, 43, 45. " And then shall many be offended ; and the love" (toward God and man) " of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved," xxiv, 10, &c. " Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household ? But if that evil servant" (wise and faithful as he was once) " shall begin to smite his fellow servants ; the lord shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites," verse 45, &c. ; apostates being no better than they.

" Take heed to yourselves," ye that believe, " lest at any time your heart be overcharged with the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares," Luke xxi, 34 : plainly implying, that otherwise they would not be " accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man."

" If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John viii, 31, 32.

" I keep my body under ; lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix, 27. " Our fathers did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink : for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them : and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased : for they were over-

thrown in the wilderness. Now, these things were for our examples: wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," x, 3, &c.

"We, therefore, as workers together with him, beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain," 2 Cor. vi, 1. But this were impossible, if none that ever had it could perish.

"Ye are fallen from grace," Gal. v, 4. "We shall reap, if we faint not," vi, 9. Therefore we shall not reap, if we do.

"We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," Heb. iii, 14.

"Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness," 2 Peter iii, 17.

"Look to yourselves, that we lose not the things which we have wrought," 2 John 8.

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown," Rev. iii, 11. And, to conclude:—

"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses," Matt. xviii, 35. *So!* How? He will retract the pardon he had given, and deliver you to the tormentors.

80. "Why, then you make salvation conditional." I make it neither conditional nor unconditional. But I declare just what I find in the Bible, neither more nor less; namely, that it is bought for every child of man, and actually given to every one that believeth. If you call

this conditional salvation, God made it so from the beginning of the world; and he hath declared it so to be, at sundry times and in divers manners; of old by Moses and the prophets, and in later times by Christ and his apostles.

“Then I never can be saved; for I can perform no conditions; for I can do nothing.” No, nor I, nor any man under heaven,—without the grace of God. “But I can do all things through Christ strengthening me.” So can you; so can every believer. And he has strengthened, and will strengthen, you more and more, if you do not wilfully resist till you quench his Spirit.

81. “Nay, but God must work irresistibly in me, or I shall never be saved.” Hold! Consider that word. You are again advancing a doctrine which has not one plain, clear text to support it. I allow, God may possibly, at some times, work irresistibly in some souls. I believe he does. But can you infer from hence, that he always works thus in all that are saved? Alas! my brother, what kind of conclusion is this? And by what scripture will you prove it? Where, I pray, is it written, that none are saved but by irresistible grace? By almighty grace, I grant; by that power alone, to which all things are possible. But show me any one plain scripture for this,—that “all saving grace is irresistible.”

82. But this doctrine is not only unsupported by Scripture, but it is flatly contrary thereto. How will you reconcile it (to instance in a very few) with the following texts?—

“He sent to call them and they would not come,” Matt. xxii, 3, &c. “He could do no mighty works there, because of their unbelief,” Mark vi, 5, 6. “There were Pharisees, and the power of the Lord was present to heal them,” Luke v, 17. Nevertheless, they were not healed in fact, as the words immediately following show.

“The Pharisees and lawyers made void the counsel of God against themselves,” Luke vii, 30. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not!” xiii, 34. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit. But there are some of you that believe not,” John vi, 63, &c. Therefore, that Spirit did not work irresistibly. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye,” Acts vii, 51. “Ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,” xiii, 46. “While it is called to-day harden not your heart. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God,” Heb. iii, 8, 12. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,” xii, 25.

83. I do but just give you a specimen of the innumerable scriptures which might be produced on this head. And why will you adhere to an opinion not only unsupported by, but utterly contrary both to reason and Scripture? Be pleased to observe here also, that you are not to consider the doctrine of irresistible grace by itself, any more than that of unconditional elec

tion, or final perseverance ; but as it stands in connection with unconditional reprobation : that millstone which hangs about the neck of your whole hypothesis.

Will you say, " I adhere to it because of its usefulness ?" Wherein does that usefulness lie ? " It exalts God and debases man." In what sense does it exalt God ? God in himself is exalted above all praise. Your meaning, therefore, I suppose, is this : It displays to others how highly he is exalted in justice, mercy, and truth. But the direct contrary of this has been shown at large ; it has been shown, by various considerations, that God is not exalted, but rather dishonored, and that in the highest degree, by supposing him to despise the work of his own hands, the far greater part of the souls which he hath made. And as to the debasing man ; if you mean, this opinion truly humbles the men that hold it, I fear it does not : I have not perceived, (and I have had large occasion to make the trial,) that all, or even the generality of them that hold it, are more humble than other men. Neither, I think, will you say, that none are humble who hold it not : so that it is neither a necessary nor a certain means of humility. And if it be so sometimes, this only proves that God can bring good out of evil.

84. The truth is, neither this opinion nor that, but the love of God humbles man, and that only. Let but this be shed abroad in his heart, and he abhors himself in dust and ashes. As soon as this enters into his soul, lowly shame covers his



face. That thought, "What is God? What hath he done for me?" is immediately followed by "What am I?" And he knoweth not what to do, or where to hide, or how to abase himself enough, before the great God of love, of whom he now knoweth, that as his majesty is, so is his mercy. Let him who has felt this (whatever be his opinion) say, whether he could then take glory to himself; whether he could ascribe to himself any part of his salvation, or the glory of any good word or thought. Lean, then, who will, on that broken reed for humility; but let the love of God humble my soul!

85. "Why, this is the very thing which recommends it. This doctrine makes men love God." I answer as before: Accidentally it may; because God can draw good out of evil. But you will not say, all who hold it love God; so it is no certain means to that end. Nor will you say, that none love him who hold it not: neither, therefore, is it a necessary means. But, indeed, when you talk at all of its "making men love God," you know not what you do. You lead men into more danger than you are aware of. You almost unavoidably lead them into resting on that opinion; you cut them off from a true dependence on the fountain of living waters, and strengthen them in hewing to themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water.

86. This is my grand objection to the doctrine of reprobation, or (which is the same) unconditional election. That it is an error, I know; because, if this were true, the whole

Scripture must be false. But it is not only for this—because it is an error—that I so earnestly oppose it, but because it is an error of so pernicious consequence to the souls of men ; because it directly and naturally tends to hinder the inward work of God in every stage of it.

87. For instance : Is a man careless and unconcerned, utterly dead in trespasses and sins ?—Exhort him then (suppose he is of your own opinion) to take some care of his immortal soul. “I take care!” says he, “What signifies my care? Why, what must be, must be. If I am elect, I must be saved ; and if I am not, I must be damned.” And the reasoning is as just and strong, as it is obvious and natural. It avails not to say, “Men may abuse any doctrine.” So they may. But this is not abusing yours. It is the plain, natural use of it. The premises cannot be denied, (on your scheme,) and the consequence is equally clear and undeniable. Is he a little serious and thoughtful now and then, though generally cold and lukewarm ?—Press him then to stir up the gift that is in him ; to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. “Alas,” says he, “what can I do ! You know, man can do nothing.” If you reply : “But you do not desire salvation ; you are not willing to be saved :” “It may be so,” says he, “but God shall make me willing in the day of his power.” So, waiting for irresistible grace, he falls faster asleep than ever. See him again, when he thoroughly awakes out of sleep ; when, in spite of his principles, fearfulness and tr

bling are come upon him, and a horrible dread hath overwhelmed him. How then will you comfort him that is well nigh swallowed up of over-much sorrow? If at all, by applying the promises of God. But against these he is fenced on every side. "These indeed," says he, "are great and precious promises. But they belong to the elect only. Therefore they are nothing to me. I am not of that number. And I never can be; for his decree is unchangeable." Has he already tasted of the good word, and the powers of the world to come? Being justified by faith, hath he peace with God? Then sin hath no dominion over him. But by and by, considering he may fall foully indeed, but cannot fall finally, he is not so jealous over himself as he was at first; he grows a little and a little slacker, till ere long he falls again into the sin from which he was clean escaped. As soon as you perceive he is entangled again and overcome, you apply the scriptures relating to that state. You conjure him not to harden his heart any more, lest his last state be worse than the first. "How can that be?" says he: "once in grace, always in grace; and I am sure I was in grace once. You shall never tear away my shield." So he sins on, and sleeps on, till he awakes in hell.

88. The observing these melancholy examples day by day, this dreadful havoc which the devil makes of souls, especially of those who had begun to run well, by means of this anti-scriptural doctrine, constrains me to oppose it

from the same principle whereon I labor to save souls from destruction. Nor is it sufficient to ask, Are there not also many who wrest the opposite doctrine to their own destruction? If there are, that is nothing to the point in question, for that is not the case here. Here is no wresting at all: the doctrine of absolute predestination naturally leads to the chambers of death.

Let an instance in each kind be proposed, and the difference is so broad, he that runneth may read it. I say, "Christ died for all. He tasted death for every man, and he willeth all men to be saved." "O," says a hearer, "then I can be saved when I will; so I may safely sin a little longer." No; this is no consequence from what I said; the words are wrested to infer what does not follow. You say, "Christ died only for the elect; and all these must and shall be saved." "O," says a hearer, "then if I am one of the elect, I must and shall be saved. Therefore I may safely sin a little longer; for my salvation cannot fail." Now, this is a fair consequence from what you said: the words are not wrested at all. No more is inferred than what plainly and undeniably follows from the premises. And the very same observation may be made on every article of that doctrine. Every branch of it, as well as this, (however the wisdom of God may sometimes draw good out of it,) has a natural, genuine tendency, without any wresting, either to prevent or obstruct holiness.

89. Brethren, would ye lie for the cause of God? I am persuaded ye would not. Think then that as ye are so am I: I speak the truth, before God my judge; not of those who were trained up therein, but of those who were lately brought over to your opinion. Many of these have I known; but I have not known one in ten of all that number, in whom it did not speedily work some of the above-named effects, according to the state of soul they were then in. And one only have I known among them all, after the closest and most impartial observation, who did not evidently show, within one year, that his heart was changed, not for the better, but for the worse.

90. I know, indeed, ye cannot easily believe this. But whether ye believe it or no, you believe, as well as I, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. May we not then, at least, join in this,—in declaring the nature of inward holiness, and testifying to all the necessity of it? May we not all thus far join in tearing away the broken reeds wherein so many rest, without either inward or outward holiness, and which they idly trust will supply its place? As far as is possible, let us join in destroying the works of the devil, and in setting up the kingdom of God upon earth, in promoting righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Of whatever opinion or denomination we are, we must serve either God or the devil. If we serve God, our agreement is far greater than our difference. Therefore, as far as may be,

setting aside that difference, let us unite in destroying the works of the devil, in bringing all we can from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And let us assist each other to value more and more the glorious grace whereby we stand, and daily to grow in that grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## TRACT II.

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### SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

ON

### ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION.

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1. God, out of his infinite love, who "delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but that all should live and be saved, hath given his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He is the true light who enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." And this light would work out the salvation of all, if not resisted. Nor is it less *universal* than inbred sin, being the purchase of his death, *who tasted death for every man*. For as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

2. But some are not afraid to assert, That

“God by an eternal and unchangeable decree hath predestinated to eternal damnation the far greater part of mankind, and that absolutely, without any respect to their works, but only for the showing the glory of his justice ; and that for the bringing this about, he hath appointed these miserable souls necessarily to walk in their wicked ways, that so his justice may lay hold on them : and that he justly condemns these, although he hath withheld from them that grace, by which alone they could have laid hold of salvation, as having decreed, (without any respect to their works,) that they shall not obey ; and that the Gospel, which he publicly invites them to accept, shall never prove effectual for their salvation, but only serve to aggravate their guilt, and occasion their greater damnation.”

3. We may safely call this doctrine a novelty, seeing, in the first four hundred years after Christ, there is no mention made of it, by any writer great or small, in any part of the Christian church. For as it is contrary to the testimony of Scripture, and to the tenor of the Gospel, so all the ancient writers, teachers and doctors of the church pass it over with a profound silence. The first foundations of it were laid in the latter writings of Augustine, who, in his heat against Pelagius, let fall some expressions which some have unhappily gleaned up for the establishment of this error ; thereby contradicting many others, and many more and frequent expressions of the same Augustine. It was afterward taught by Dominic, a popish friar,

and the monks of his order ; and at last it was unhappily taken up by John Calvin, (otherwise a man in divers respects to be commended, (to the great staining of his reputation, and defamation both of the Protestant and of the Christian religion. However, we should not reject it for the silence of the ancients, if it had any real bottom in the word of God, and if it were not *highly injurious to God himself, to Jesus Christ our Mediator and Redeemer, to the power, virtue, nobility, and excellency of his blessed Gospel, and lastly, to all mankind.*

4. First, *It is highly injurious to God*, because it makes him the author of sin. I confess the asserters of this doctrine deny this consequence of it : but that is but a mere allusion, and is equally ridiculous as if a man should deny that *two* and *two* make *four*. For if God has decreed that the reprobated shall perish, and if he hath also decreed, that they should walk in those wicked ways by which they are led to that end : who, I pray, is the first author and cause thereof but God, who so willed and decreed ? This is as plain and natural a consequence as any can possibly be. And therefore, although many of the preachers of this doctrine have sought out various strange, strained, and intricate distinctions to avoid it ; yet some, and that of the most eminent among them, have openly acknowledged it. I shall instance a few among many passages. “ I say, that by the ordination and will of God, Adam fell. God would have man to fall. Man is blinded by the will



and commandment of God. We refer the causes of hardening us to God. The highest or remote causes of hardening, is the will of God." (*Calvin in cap. 3, Gen. Id. 1. Inst. c. 18. s. 1. Id. lib. de præd. &c.*) These are Calvin's words. "God," saith Beza, "hath predestinated whomsoever he saw meet, not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it," (*Beza lib. de præd.*)

"It is certain," saith Zanchius, "that God is the first cause of obduration. Reprobates are held so fast under God's almighty decree, that they cannot but sin and perish," (*Zanch. de excæc. q. 5. Id. lib. 5. de nat. Dei.*) "God," saith Martyr, "doth incline and force the wills of wicked men into great sins," (*Martyr in Rom.*) "God," saith Zuinglius, "moveth the robber to kill. He killeth, God forcing him thereunto," (*Zuring. lib. de provid. c. 5.*) "Reprobate persons," saith Piscator, are absolutely ordained to this twofold end, to undergo everlasting punishment, and necessarily to sin: and therefore to sin, that they may be justly punished," (*Resp. ad. vorst. par. 1. p. 120.*)

5. If these sayings do not import, That God is *the author of sin*, we must not then seek these men's opinions from their words, but some way else. It seems as if they had assumed to themselves that monstrous twofold will they feigned of God: one by which they *declare* their minds openly; and another, more *secret* and *hidden*, which is quite contrary to the other. Nor doth it at all help them to say, that man

sins *willingly* ; since that *willingness* to sin is (according to their judgment) so necessarily imposed upon him that he cannot but be willing, because God hath willed and decreed him to be so. This shift is just as if I should take a child, unable to resist me, and throw it down from a high precipice. The weight of its body indeed makes it go readily down, and the violence of the fall beats out its brains. But though the weight of its body, and not any immediate stroke of my hand, makes the child die ; whether is the child or I the proper cause of its death ? Let then any man judge, whether they who make God's part as great, and more immediate, in the sins of men, do not make God *the author of sin*, and so are highly injurious to him ?

6. Secondly, This doctrine is injurious to God, because it makes him delight in the death of sinners, contrary to the express words of God himself: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii, 11. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour : who willeth all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. ii, 4. "The Lord is long suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance." But if he hath created men only for this very end, that he might show forth his vengeance upon them, (as these men affirm, and for affecting this end

hath withheld from them that grace whereby alone they could be saved from perishing, yea, and also predestinated the evil, that they might fall into it, certainly he must *delight in their death*, contrary to his own express declaration.

7. Thirdly, *This doctrine is highly injurious to Christ our Mediator, and to the efficacy and excellency of his Gospel.* For it supposes his mediation to be necessarily of none effect with regard to the salvation of the greater part of the world: as if he had not by his sufferings and death thoroughly *broken down the middle wall*, nor yet removed the *wrath of God*, or purchased the love of God for all mankind: as if it was afore decreed, that it should be of no service to the far greater part of mankind. And it is to no purpose to say, that his death was of efficacy enough to have saved all mankind; if in effect its virtue be not so far extended, as to put all mankind into a capacity of salvation.

8. Fourthly, *It makes the preaching of the Gospel a mere mock and illusion*, if many of those to whom it is preached, are by an irrevocable decree shut out from being benefited by it. It wholly makes useless the preaching of faith and repentance, and the whole tenor of the Gospel promises and threatenings. For if such a decree be already past, man need do nothing but wait for *irresistible grace*, which, if he be *elected*, will come, though it be but at his last hour: and if he be *reprobated* will never come, he his diligence and waiting what it can.

9. Fifthly, This doctrine makes the coming

of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross, which the Scripture affirms to have been the fruit of God's love to the world, to have been rather a testimony of God's wrath to the world, yea, one of the greatest judgments and severest acts that can be conceived of God's indignation toward mankind: it being only ordained (according to this doctrine) to save a very few, and for the hardening and increasing the damnation of the far greater number of men, namely, of all those who do not truly believe; the causes of which unbelief again, (as these divines, so called, above assert,) is the hidden counsel of God. Certainly than the coming of Christ was never to them a testimony of God's love, but rather of his implacable wrath: and if the world may be taken for the far greater number of such as live in it, God never loved the world, according to this doctrine, but rather hated it greatly, in sending his Son to be crucified in it.

10. Sixthly, *This doctrine is highly injurious to mankind*; for it renders them in a far worse condition than the devils in hell. For these were some time in a capacity to have stood; they might have kept their happy estate, but would not: whereas many millions of men are tormented for ever, according to them, who never were happy, nor ever can be. It renders them worse than the beasts of the field, of whom the master requires no more than they are able to perform; and if they be killed, death is to them the end of all sorrow; whereas man is in pain without end, for not doing that which he

never was able to do. It puts him in a far worse condition than Pharaoh put the Israelites: for though he withheld straw from them, yet they could get it by much labor. But they make God to withhold from men all means of salvation, so that they cannot attain it by all their pains. Yea, they place mankind in that condition which the poets feign of Tantalus; who, oppressed with thirst, stands in water up to the chin, yet can by no means reach it with his tongue; and being tormented with hunger, hath fruits hanging at his very lips, yet so as he can never lay hold of them with his teeth; and these things are so near him, not to nourish him, but to torment him. So do these teachers make God deal with mankind. They make the outward creation, the works of Providence, the smitings of conscience, sufficient to convince the reprobates of sin, but never intended to help them to salvation. They make the preaching of the Gospel, and the offer of salvation by Christ, sufficient to condemn them; serving to beget a seeming faith and a vain hope; yet by reason of God's irresistible decree, all these (say they) are wholly ineffectual to bring them the least step toward salvation, and do only contribute to make their condemnation the greater, and their torments the more violent and intolerable.

11. In direct opposition to this, we affirm, That "God out of his infinite love, who delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but that all should live and be saved, hath sent his only-be-

gotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him might be saved." This doctrine is so evident from the Scripture testimony, that there is scarce found any other article of the Christian faith so frequently, so plainly, and so positively asserted. It is that which maketh the preaching of Christ to be indeed the Gospel, or "glad tidings to all;" as the angel declared his coming to be, Luke ii, 10, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." Whereas if this coming of Christ hath not brought a possibility of salvation to *all*, it should rather have been accounted "bad tidings of great sorrow to most people." Neither would the angels have had reason to sing, "Peace on earth and good will toward men," if the greatest part of mankind had been necessarily shut out from receiving any benefit from it. And indeed, if so, how should Christ have sent out his servants to "preach the Gospel to every creature?" That is, to every son and daughter of mankind: for here is no exception. He commands them to preach salvation to all, repentance and remission of sins to all, warning every one and exhorting every one, as Paul did, Col. i, 28. But how could they have preached the Gospel to *every man*, as became the ministers of Christ, *in much assurance*, if salvation by that Gospel had not been possible to all? What if some of these had asked them, Hath Christ died for me? Should they have answered conditionally, If thou repent, Christ died for thee! The same question would have recurred

Hath Christ died for me that I may repent? Otherwise my repentance is impossible. To this nothing could be answered but the same thing over again. Whereas those who *bring the glad tidings of the Gospel of peace* are to preach the common salvation, repentance unto all, offering a door of mercy and hope to all through Jesus Christ, "who gave himself a ransom for all." The Gospel invites all. And certainly Christ intended not to deceive and delude the greater part of mankind, when he invites and cries, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If *all* then ought to seek after him, and to look for salvation by him, he must needs have made *salvation possible to all*. For who is bound to seek after that which is impossible!—Certainly it were a mocking of men to bid them do so. And such as deny, that by the death of Christ *salvation* is made possible to all men, do most blasphemously make God mock the world, in giving his servants a commission *to preach the Gospel of salvation unto all*, while he hath before decreed, that it shall not be possible for them to receive it. Do not they make the Lord to send forth his servants *with a lie in their mouths*, commanding them to bid *all* and *every one* believe, that Christ died for them, and had purchased salvation for them; whereas (according to this doctrine) he hath done no such thing, or ever intended it? Seeing then Christ hath commanded to preach "repentance and remission of sins" *to all*, it is certain that

he died for all; and that it is possible for all to repent and believe; inasmuch as he, who commissioned his servants thus to preach, is a God of truth, and no mocker of poor mankind, neither doth he require of any man that which it is simply impossible for him to do.

12. Moreover, if we regard the testimony of the Scripture, there is not, that I know of, one scripture which affirms, Christ did not die for all, whereas there are divers scriptures, which positively and expressly affirm, *he did*. As 1 Tim. ii, 1, 3, 4, 6, "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, &c. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth—Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Except we make the apostle to assert quite another thing than he meant, there can be nothing more plain than this. For, first, he here directs them to pray for all men: and to prevent such an objection as this, "Christ prayed not for the world, neither willeth he us to pray for all: because he willeth not that all should be saved, but hath ordained many to be damned," he adds, "This is good and acceptable with God, who willeth all men to be saved." I desire to know what can be more expressly affirmed? Or, can any two propositions be stated in terms more contradictory than these two:—

"God willeth not some men to be saved," and



**“ God willeth all men to be saved ?”**

If we believe the last, as the apostle hath affirmed, the first cannot be true. Whence (to conclude) he gives us the reason of Christ's willingness that all men should be saved, in these words, “ Who gave himself a ransom for all.” As if he had said, since he gave himself a ransom for all, it is plain he willeth all men to be saved.

13. The same thing is positively affirmed, Heb. ii, ix, “ We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man.” He that will but open his eyes, may see this truth here asserted. If “ he tasted death for every man,” then certainly there is no man for whom he did not taste death ; and then there is no man who may not be made a sharer of the benefit of it.

14. Again, our Lord himself says, he came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved,” John iii, 17, and John xii, 47, “ he came not to judge the world, but to save the world ;” whereas, according to that doctrine, he did come rather to condemn the world, and not that it might be saved by him. For if he did not come to bring salvation to the greater part of mankind, but to increase their condemnation, it necessarily follows, that he did not come with an intention to save, but to judge and condemn the greater part of the world, contrary to his express testimony.

15. Yet again, as the Apostle Paul asserts,

that God willeth the salvation of all, so doth the Apostle Peter assert, that he willeth not the perishing of any, 2 Pet. iii, 9. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And this is agreeable to that of the prophet, Ezek. xxxiii, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Now if it be safe to believe God, we must not think that he intends to cheat us by all these expressions, that he is in good earnest. And if this will take effect the blame is on our parts; which could not be if Christ had never died for us, but left us under an impossibility of salvation. What mean all those earnest invitations, all those regretting expostulations the Scripture is full of? As, "*Why will ye die, O house of Israel? They will not come unto me that they might have life. I have waited to be gracious to you. How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not?*" Are men who are so invited under no capacity of being saved? Is salvation impossible to them! Will you then suppose God in this, to be only like the author of romance, or master of a comedy, who amuses and raises the various affections and passions of his spectators: sometimes leading them into hope, and sometimes into despair: all this being in effect but a mere illusion, while he hath appointed what the conclusion of all shall be?

16. Farther yet : This doctrine is abundantly confirmed by that of the apostle, 1 John ii, 1, 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." The way which our adversaries take to evade this testimony, is most foolish and ridiculous. The world here, say they, is the world of believers; for which we have nothing but their own assertion. For, first, let them show me if they can, in all the Scripture, where the whole world is taken for believers only. I shall show them where it is many times taken for the quite contrary, as "The world knoweth me not: the world receiveth me not: I am not of this world." Beside all these scriptures, Psalm xvii, 14; Isa. xiii, 11; Matt. xviii, 7; John vii, 7, and viii, 26, and xii, 19, and xiv, 17, and xv, 18, 19, and xvii, 14, and xviii, 20; 1 Cor. i, 21, and ii, 12, and vi, 2; Gal. vi, 14; James i, 27; 2 Peter ii, 20; 1 John ii, 15, and iii, 1, and iv, 4, 5; and many more. Secondly, The apostle in this very place contradistinguishes the world from the saints, thus, "and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." What means the apostle by *ours* here? Is not that the sins of believers? Was not he one of those, believers? And was not this a universal epistle, written to all the saints that then were? So that according to these men's comment, there would be a very unnecessary and foolish redundancy in the apostle's words, as if he had

said, "He is a propitiation not only for the sins of all believers, but also for the sins of all believers." Is not this to make the apostle's words nonsense? Let them show us, wherever there is such a manner of speaking in all the Scripture: where any of the penmen first name the believers together with themselves, and then contradistinguish them from some other whole world of believers.

17. But we need not a better interpreter for the apostle than himself, who uses the very same expression in the same epistle, chapter v, 19, saying, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." There cannot be found in all the Scripture, two places which better answer one another: seeing in both, the same apostle in the same epistle, to the same persons, contradistinguishes himself and the saints to whom he writes from the whole world; which yet, according to these men's comments, ought to be understood of believers: as if St. John had said, "We know particular believers are of God, but the whole world of believers lieth in wickedness." What absurd wresting of Scripture were this? And yet it may be as well pleaded for as the other. Seeing then the apostle tells us plainly, that Christ died not only for the church of God to whom he wrote, but also for the whole world, let us hold fast this truth, which we have received, not of men, but of God.

18. But in order to make it yet more plain, we shall show these two things:

First, That God hath given to every man born into the world, a time or day of visitation, during which they may be saved.

Secondly, That for this end, he hath given to every man a measure of light and grace, which, if it is not resisted, will work the salvation of all ; but if it is, will become their condemnation.

19. Now, according to this doctrine, the mercy of God is excellently well set forth, in that none are necessarily shut out from salvation ; and his justice, in that he condemns none but such as might have been saved, and would not.

This doctrine agrees with the whole tenor of the Gospel, wherein repentance and remission of sins is commanded to be preached to every creature.

It magnifies the merits and death of Christ, in that it not only accounts them sufficient to save all, but declares them to be brought so nigh to all, that they are thereby put into a capacity of salvation.

It exalts, above all, the grace of God, to which it attributes all good, ascribing thereto not only the first motions of good, but also the whole conversion and salvation of the soul.

As it makes the whole salvation of man to depend on God, so it makes his condemnation to be wholly of himself, in that he resisted the grace of God, and when he might have been saved, would not.

It takes away all ground of despair, in that it gives every man cause to hope for salvation,

nor yet doth it feed any one in security, in that none know how soon their day may expire; and therefore it is a complete incitement and lively encouragement to every man, if he forsake evil and close with that which is good.

Lastly, it is really and in effect, though not in so many words, confirmed and established by all the preachers of the Christian religion, that ever were or now are, even by those who otherwise oppose this doctrine: in that they all, whatsoever place they come to, do preach to the people and to every individual among them, that they may be saved, entreating them to believe in Christ who hath died for them. So that what they deny in the general, they acknowledge of every particular; there being no man to whom they do not preach, in order to salvation, telling him Jesus Christ calls and wills him to believe and be saved: and that if he refuse he shall therefore be condemned, and his condemnation shall be of himself. Such is the power of truth, that it constrains its adversaries, even against their wills, to plead for it.

20. We do not indeed by this day of visitation understand the whole time of a man's life; though in some it may be extended to the very hour of death: but such a season, at least, as sufficiently clears God of every man's condemnation, which to some may be sooner, and to others later, according as the Lord in his wisdom sees meet. So that many men may outlive this day, after which God suffers them to be hardened, as a just punishment of their wilful

unbelief, and even raises them up as instruments of wrath, and makes them a scourge one against another. To men in this condition may be fitly applied those scriptures which are abused to prove that God constrains man to sin. This is plainly expressed by the apostle, Rom. i, from verse 17 to the end : but especially verse 28, " Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." And that many outlive the day of their visitation, appears by Christ's weeping over Jerusalem, Luke xix, 42, saying, " If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace ! But now they are hid from thy eyes : " this plainly imports a time when they might have known them, which now was removed from them.

21. We come now more directly to show, " That God hath given to every man a day or time of visitation, wherein it is possible for him to be saved." Now if we prove that there is a time or day given, in which those might have been saved, who actually perish, the matter is done. (For none deny that those who are saved have a day of visitation.) And this appears by the complaints the Spirit of God, throughout the whole Scripture, makes, even to those that did perish, challenging them for not accepting God's visitation and offered mercy. Thus the Lord expresses himself first of all to Cain, Gen. iv. 6, 7, " And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth, and why is thy

countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." This was said to Cain before he slew his brother. We see how God gave him warning; and offered, in the day of his visitation, acceptance if he did well. For those words, "Shalt thou not be accepted?" must import, Thou shalt be accepted if thou doest well. So that if we may trust God, the fountain of all truth, there was a day in which it was possible even for Cain to be accepted. The Lord himself also shows, that he gave a day of visitation to the old world, Gen. vi, 3, "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man:" manifestly implying that his Spirit did strive with him for a season, which season expiring, God ceased to strive with him in order to his salvation. From this day of visitation which God hath given to man, it is, that he is said to *wait to be gracious*, Isa. xxx, 6; Numb. xiv, 18. And to be *long suffering*, Exod. xxxiv, 18; Psalm lxxxvi, 15; and Jer. xv, 15, where the prophet in his prayer lays hold on the *long suffering of God*; and in his expostulating with God, he shuts out the objection of our adversaries in the 18th verse, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou altogether be unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" Whereas, according to our adversaries' opinion, the *pain* of the most part of men is *perpetual*, and *their wound altogether incurable*. Yea, the offer of salvation unto them is as a



*lie and waters that fail*, being never intended to be of any effect unto them. The Apostle Peter says expressly, that this "long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah for those of the old world:" answerable to Gen. vi, 3. And that none may object that this *long suffering or striving of the Lord* was not in order to their salvation, the same apostle saith as expressly, 2 Pet. iii, 15, That *the long suffering of God is to be accounted salvation*: and with this *long suffering* a little before he couples that "he is not willing that any should perish." Where, taking him for his own interpreter, as is most fit, he teaches, that those to whom the Lord is *long suffering*, (which he declares he was to the old world, and is now to all, "not willing that any should perish,") they are to "account this long suffering of God to them salvation." But how can they account it salvation, if there be not so much as a possibility of salvation conveyed to them therein?

22. St. Peter farther refers to the writings of Paul, showing this to have been the universal doctrine; where it is observable he adds, "In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction;" intimating plainly these expressions in Paul's epistles, as Rom. ix, &c. which some unlearned in spiritual things *wrested*, so as to contradict "God's long suffering toward all, not willing that any of them should perish, but that all should come to the saving knowledge of his truth." Would to God

many had taken more heed than they have to this advertisement!

23. That place of the Apostle Paul which Peter seems here more particularly to hint at, doth much contribute also to clear the matter, Rom. ii, 4, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" St. Paul speaks here to the unregenerate and wicked, who (in the following verse he saith) "treasure up wrath unto the day of wrath." And to such he commends "the riches of the forbearance and long suffering of God," showing that its tending is to lead them to repentance. But how could it have this tendency, to lead them to repentance? Or how could it be called *riches of goodness* to them, if there was not a time wherein they might repent by it, and come to be sharers of the *riches* thereof?

24. The sum is this: if God plead with the wicked, from the possibility of their being accepted; if God's Spirit strive with them for a season, in order to save them who afterward perish; if he wait to be gracious unto them; if he be long suffering toward them; if during the time of his long suffering God willeth them not to perish, but by the riches of his goodness and forbearance leadeth them to repentance; then there was a day of visitation, even to those who have perished, wherein they might have been saved.

25. Secondly, This appears from Isaiah v, 4, "What could I have done more to my vineyard?" For, in verse 2, he saith, "He had

fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines. And yet," saith he, "when I looked it should have brought forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes." Wherefore he calleth the men of Judah to be judges between him and his vineyard, saying, "What could I have done more to my vineyard than I have done in it? And yet," as is said, "it brought forth wild grapes:" which was applied to those in Israel who refused God's mercy. The same similitude is used by Christ, Matt. xxi, 33; Mark xii, 1; and Luke xx, 9, where Jesus shows, how to some a vineyard was planted, and all things given necessary for them, to get them to render fruit to their master, and how the master many times waited to be merciful to them, in sending servants after servants, and passing by many offences, before he determined to destroy and cast them out. Now this cannot be misunderstood of the saints, or of such as repent and are saved: for it is said expressly, "He will destroy them." Neither would the parable any way answer the end for which it was brought, if these men had not been in a capacity to have done good. Yea, such was their capacity, that Christ saith in the prophet, "What could I have done more?" So that it is manifest by this parable, repeated by three evangelists, that Christ declares his long suffering toward those men, who, when means of salvation were afforded to them, did nevertheless resist, and would not be saved.

26. Lastly, That there is a day of visitation

given even to the wicked, wherein they may be saved, and which being expired they are then shut out from salvation, appears evidently by Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem, expressed in three sundry places, Matt. xxii, 37 : Luke xiii, 34, and xix, 41, 42 ; " And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes ;" than which nothing can be more plain. For, first, he here shows, that there was a day wherein the inhabitants of Jerusalem might " have known those things that belonged to their peace ;" Secondly, that during that day he was willing to have " gathered them even as a hen gathereth her young ;" Thirdly, that because they refused " the things belonging to their peace," they were at length " hid from their eyes." Why were they hid ? Because ye would not suffer me to " gather you ;" ye would not see those things that were good for you, in the season of God's love toward you, and therefore " now," that day being expired, " ye cannot see them." And for a farther judgment, God suffers you to be hardened in unbelief.

27. So it is, after they have rejected the offer of mercy and salvation, and not before, that God hardens men's hearts. And thus, " To him that hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, " shall be taken away even that which he hath ;" " he hath not," because he hath lost the season of using it, and so to him it is now

as nothing. For Christ uses this expression, Matt. xxv, 29, on occasion of the taking "the one talent" from the slothful servant; which talent was no way insufficient of itself, but of 'he same nature with those given to the others. And therefore the Lord had reason to exact the profit of it proportionably, as of the rest. So (I say) it is after rejecting the day of visitation that the judgment of obduration is inflicted on men: as Christ pronounces it on the Jews, out of Isaiah vi, 9, which all the four evangelists mention: Matt. xiii, 15; Mark iv, 12; Luke viii, 10; John xii, 40. And last of all, St. Paul, after he had offered salvation to the Jews at Rome, pronounces the same, Acts xxviii, 26, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." So it appears, that God would have had them to see, but "they closed their eyes;" and therefore they were justly hardened.

28. What now remains to be proved is, *That God hath given to every man, during the day of his visitation, a sufficient measure of saving light and grace.* And this I shall prove through God's assistance, by plain and clear testimonies of Scripture.

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29. First, that of St. John i, 9, "That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He hath said before, "The life that is in him is the light of men," and, "the light shineth in darkness;" and to this he adds, "he is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

30. From whence we may in short observe, that the apostle calls Christ "the light of men." And as he is the light, "if we walk with him in that light" which he communicates to us, we "come to have fellowship" and communion "with him," as the same apostle said elsewhere, 1 John i, 7. Secondly, That "this light shineth in the darkness, though the darkness comprehend it not." Thirdly, That "this true light lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Here the apostle carefully avoids their captiousness, who would restrain this to a certain number; for where every one is, there is none excluded. And should they say, that this "every man," is only *every one of the elect*, the following words, "every man that cometh into the world," would plainly refute them. So that it is clear, there comes no man into the world, whom Christ hath not "enlightened" in some measure, and in whose dark heart the light hath not shined. "Though the darkness comprehend it not," yet it "shineth" there, and the nature thereof is to dispel the darkness, where men shut not their eyes upon it.

31. And for what end this light is given is expressed in verse 7, where John is said to

come for "a witness to bear witness to the light, that all men through it ( $\delta\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ ) might believe." Our translators indeed (to suit their doctrine) have turned the words "through him," as if all men were to believe through John. For which as there is nothing in the text, so it is contrary to the whole strain of the context. For seeing Christ hath lighted every man with this light, is it not that they may come to believe "through it?" John shined not in the darkness," but this light "shineth in the darkness, that having dispelled the darkness, it may beget faith.

32. Seeing then this is the light of Jesus Christ, and the light through which men come to believe, it needs not to be doubted, but that it is a supernatural, saving, and sufficient light. It cannot be any of the natural faculties of our soul, because it is said to shine in the darkness, which darkness is no other than the natural state of man. And that this is sufficient and saving, I prove thus :

That which is given that all men through it may believe ; that by walking in which we have fellowship with God, must be sufficient to salvation : but such is "this light." Therefore it is sufficient for salvation.

Again, that which we are commanded to "believe in, that we may become the children of the light," must be a supernatural, sufficient, and saving principle : but we are commanded so to "believe in this light." Therefore, it is a supernatural, sufficient, and saving principle.

The first proposition cannot be denied : the second is Christ's own words, John xii, 36,—  
 “ While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light.”

33. If it be said, that by “ light ” here is meant Christ's outward person, this is sufficiently answered by the words themselves, and by the verse going before, “ Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you ; ” plainly importing that when that light in which they were to believe was removed, they should lose the capacity or season of believing. Now this could not be understood of Christ's person ; for many did savingly believe in him (as we do at this day) when his outward person was far removed from them. So that this light in which they were commanded to believe, must be that inward light from Christ, which shines in every man's heart for a season, even during the day of his visitation : while this continueth to call, invite, and exhort, men are said to have it, and may believe in it. But when they have rejected it, it is at length withdrawn, and then they know not where to go. And therefore to such rebellious ones, the day of the Lord is said to be darkness, and not “ light,” Amos v, 18.

34. That “ a measure of this saving light or grace is given to all,” Christ telleth us expressly in the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii ; Mark iv, and Luke viii, where he saith that the seed sown in those several sorts of ground is the “ word of the kingdom,” even that word which, as St. James saith, “ is able to save the



soul." Now we may observe that the seed which was sown by the "wayside," and in the "stony" and "thorny ground," although it did not profit there, was the same seed which was sown on the "good ground." But the cares of the world, or the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things, or the fear of persecution, hinders this seed from growing in the hearts of many. Not but that, in its own nature, it is sufficient to salvation: being the very same with that which groweth up and prospereth in the hearts of those who receive it. So that, though all are not saved by it, yet there is a seed of salvation sown in the hearts of all, which would grow up and save the soul, if it were not choked and hindered.

35. To this answers the parable of the "talents," Matt. xxv. He that had "two talents" was accepted as well as he that had five, because he used them to his master's profit. And he that had one might have done the same. His *talent* was of the same nature with the rest, and was as capable to have brought forth an increase in proportion, as any of theirs. And so, though there be not a like proportion of grace given to all, but to some "five talents," to some "two," and to some "one talent" only, yet there is given to *all* that which is sufficient, and no more is required than according to what is given: for "unto whomsoever much is given, of him also much shall be required," Luke xii, 48. "He that had the two talents was accepted" in gaining *four*, nothing less than he

that gave the *ten*. So should he also that gave the *one*, if he had gained *two*. And no doubt *one* was as capable of producing *two*, as *five* of producing *ten*, or *two four*.

36. I shall add but one proof more, "*that all men have a measure of saving grace*," which is that of the Apostle Paul to Titus, ii, 11. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men:" than which there can be nothing more clear, it comprehending both parts of the controversy. First, it testifies, that it is no natural principle, but the "grace of God that bringeth salvation." Secondly, it says that this hath appeared, not to *a few*, but "to all men." And there is nothing (as the following words declare) required of man, which this grace teaches not. Yet I have heard a public preacher, to evade the strength of this text, and deny his grace to be saving, say, "*It means only common graces, such as is the heat of the fire and the light of the sun.*" Such is the darkness of those that oppose the truth! Whereas the text saith expressly, it is saving (*Σωτηριος*.) Others that cannot deny but it is saving, say, This *all*, means not every individual, but only some of all kinds. But is a bare denial sufficient to overturn a positive assertion? If the Scriptures may be so abused, what so absurd as may be not proved from them? Or what so manifest that it may not be denied? We have then no reason to be staggered at their denying what the Scripture expressly affirms. They may as well persuade us that we do not intend that which we affirm,

as make us believe the apostle speaks a thing in plain words, and yet intends quite the contrary.

37. And indeed can there be any thing more absurd, than to say, where the word is plainly *all*, it does not mean *all*, but only *few*? It is true, that *all* is sometimes taken for the *greater number*, of two numbers mentioned; but let them show us if they can, either in Scripture, or profane or ecclesiastical writings, that any man who wrote sense, did ever use the word *all*, to express of two numbers the lesser. Whereas they affirm that the far lesser number have received saving grace, and yet will have the apostle to signify them only by the word *all*. contrary to all the rules of speaking, as well as to the whole tenor of the Gospel.

38. We conclude, then, that "the Gospel is" indeed "good tidings of great joy which may be unto all people:" that the ministers thereof, "are to preach to every creature," to declare to all the "common salvation," and to offer "repentance and remission of sins to all, warning every one, and exhorting every one:" that Christ "died for all" who died in *Adam*, and that "he gave himself a ransom for all; tasting death for every man:" that "he came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved: that he willeth that all men should be saved, and willeth not that any should perish:" that "he is the propitiation, not for our sins only, who believe, but also for the sins of the whole world:" that accordingly he giveth to all a day of visitation, wherein it

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is possible for them to be saved ; and therein a measure of saving grace, so that if they die, their blood is on their own heads : seeing, when they *might* they *would* not come unto him, that they might have life.

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### TRACT III.

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#### SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE DOCTRINES OF

#### ELECTION AND REPROBATION.

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THAT there is a general sufficiency of pardon, grace, and happiness, provided for all mankind through Jesus Christ, which it is left to themselves to accept or refuse, may, I think, be proved by the following considerations :—

1. It is very hard to vindicate the *sincerity* of the blessed God, or his Son, in their universal offers of grace and salvation to men, and their sending ministers with such messages and invitations to accept of mercy, if there be not such a conditional pardon and salvation provided for them.

His ministers indeed, as they know not the event of things, may be sincere in offering salvation to all persons, according to their general commission, “ Go ye into all the world, and

preach the Gospel to every creature." But how can God or Christ be sincere in sending them with this commission, to offer this grace to all men if God has never provided such grace for any but the elect, no not so much as conditionally.

It is hard to suppose that the great God, who is truth itself, and faithful in all his dealings, should call upon dying men to trust in a Saviour for eternal life, when this Saviour has not eternal life intrusted with him to give them if they do as he requires! It is hard to conceive, how the great Governor of the world can be sincere in inviting sinners, who are on the brink of hell, to cast themselves upon an empty word of invitation, a mere shadow and appearance of support, if there be nothing real to bear them up from those deeps of destruction, nothing but mere words and empty invitations. Can we think that the righteous and holy God would encourage his ministers to call them to lean and rest the weight of their immortal concerns upon a Gospel, a covenant of grace, a mediator, and his merit; all which are a mere nothing with regard to them, a heap of empty names, an unsupporting void which cannot uphold them? When our blessed Redeemer charges the Jews with aggravated guilt for refusing his grace, can we suppose he had no grace in his hand to offer them? Or, when he, as it were, consigns them over to death, because, says he, "ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life;" can we suppose he has no eternal life, not so

much as a conditional grant of it in his hands for them ?

To avoid these hard and absurd consequences of the "calls of grace and offers of salvation," where none is really provided, some roundly assert there are no calls of grace, no offers of salvation at all in the word of God to any but the elect. But this runs counter to a great many plain scriptures, wherein pardon and salvation are proposed to all sinners whatsoever, without any regard whether they are chosen of God or not. And it is the design and voice of the whole current of Scripture to call sinners to repentance by promises of mercy, and to enforce that which Isaiah speaks, chapter lv, 6, 7, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found : call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

2. It is very hard to defend the sincerity of the Spirit of God, in awakening the consciences of those persons who are not elected, [as appears from this, that they live and die in their sins,] and stirring them up to think of receiving the salvation of Christ upon the terms of the Gospel, if there be no such salvation provided for them, to receive upon any terms. It is hard to suppose he should excite the consciences of such sinners in any degree to any repentings for sin, and bring them near to the kingdom of heaven, in the beginnings of conviction, if there

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was no pardon provided in any sense for those who are not chosen, whether they repent or no. It is hard to suppose he should give them any, even the weakest excitations, to trust in the merit of a Saviour, if that merit has obtained no salvation for them, not so much as conditional.

Shall it be ever said, that God the Father, and his Son, and Spirit, have done each their parts to encourage and excite non-elect sinners to accept of, and trust in the Gospel for salvation, when there is not so much as the least salvation, even in a conditional sense, provided for them to accept of?

3. It is equally difficult to vindicate the *equity* of God, as the *Judge* of all men, in condemning unbelievers for not accepting the offers of pardon, if no pardon was provided for them; and in punishing them eternally for not resting on the merit of Christ, and receiving his salvation, if there was no such merit for them to rest upon, nor any such salvation for them to receive. Surely it will appear in that day, that the condemnation of sinners and their eternal misery, was merely the fruit of their refusing to receive the grace of God provided for them, and offered to them, and not of any want of sufficient provision made for them, by him who calls them to receive it. The language of Christ in his ministry to sinners, is, *Come* to the feast of the Gospel, "for all things are ready." This is the condemnation, that when light came into the world, they loved darkness rather than light.

Men are expressly condemned, because they would not come unto Christ, that they might have life. And (as the Apostle John often represents) therefore "they die in their sins." And surely the Lord Jesus would never be sent in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel, if there was no sufficient provision made, whereby they might be enabled to obey it!

It will render this consideration much more forcible, when we observe, that there is a much severer condemnation to those who have heard of this Gospel, and not embraced it, in proportion to the light wherein it was set before them. It shall be *less tolerable* for those who refused the Gospel that Christ preached, "than for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment." So their having it thus proposed, makes their case much worse than if it had never been proposed to them. And can we think that the righteous Judge of the world will send forth words of grace and salvation, when there is no real grace or salvation in those words, on purpose to make his creatures so much the more miserable? It is very hard indeed to vindicate the righteousness of the sentence of their double condemnation, for refusing pardon and salvation, if there was not any pardon nor any salvation provided for them!

4. The word of God, by the general commands, promises, and threatenings, given to all men whatsoever, and often repeated therein, represents mankind as in a state of trial, and



in the way to eternal rewards or punishments, according to their behavior in this life. Now it is very hard to suppose all this should be no real and just representation, but a mere amusement: it is hard to suppose that all these proposals of mercy, and displays of the gracious dealings of God, should be an empty show with regard to all the millions of mankind, beside the few that are chosen to happiness. It is hard to suppose that they should be so fixed in a wretched, hopeless, and deplorable state, under the first sin of the first man, as to be utterly irrecoverable from the ruins of it: yea, as unalterably lost as the very devils are, for whom there was no Saviour provided, and whom God has not treated in this way of precept, promise, and threatening. Is there not a plain difference made in Scripture between "the angels who sinned, whom God spared not, but cast them down" from heaven "under chains of darkness, until the judgment of the great day;" and mankind *who sinned*, to whom God giveth time and space for repentance, means of grace, offers of pardon, conditional promises of salvation, with a command to all men to accept it? What can manifest the blessed God to be upon terms of mercy with them, if this does not?

5. This seems to be a fair and easy way to answer those texts of Scripture, which represent God as, 1 Tim. iv, 10, "the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe;" and assert, that, Acts xvii, 30, "God calls and commands all men every where to repent;" that, Heb. ii,

9, "Christ tasted death for every man;" that, 1 Tim. ii, 6, "he gave himself a ransom for all men, to be testified in due time;" that, 2 Cor. v, 14, "he died for all;" that, 1 John ii, 2, "he gave himself to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" that, chap. iv, 14, "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" that John iii, 16, "God so loved the world, that he sent his Son, not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might be saved; and that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The doctrine of absolute reprobation stands in such a direct contradiction to all our notions of kindness, and love to others, in which the blessed God is set forth as our example, that we cannot tell how to receive it. Yet if it were ever so true, and ever so plainly revealed in Scripture, it would only be a doctrine which might require our *silent submission* to it, with awful reverence of the majesty of the great God. But it is by no means a doctrine in which we could or should rejoice and glory, or take pleasure in it, because it has so dreadful an aspect on far the greatest part of our fellow creatures. Nor do I think the blessed God would require us so far to divest ourselves of humanity, as to take a secret satisfaction in the absolute and eternal appointment of such numbers of kindred flesh and blood to everlasting perdition. Much less should we make this awful and terrible article a matter of our public boast and triumph,

(even if we could prove it to be revealed,) but rather mourn for it.

And since so many scriptures assert, that Christ lived and died as a common mediator of mankind, methinks this doctrine of the extensive goodness of God is a much more desirable opinion, and should be more cheerfully received by us, as it is so agreeable to our charity to all men, and so necessary for vindicating the justice, goodness, and sincerity of the blessed God, in his transactions with mankind.

When therefore I hear men talk of the doctrine of reprobation, with a special gust and relish, as a favorite doctrine, I cannot but suspect their good temper, and doubt whether they love their neighbor as themselves. The case is very different, when saints are said in Scripture to rejoice in the public judgments of God upon the anti-christian state, or upon the wicked oppressors, and incorrigible sinners of the world. For that is the effect of God's equity and righteousness, as a wise and faithful governor. But this would be an instance merely of his dreadful sovereignty, and hardly consistent with goodness.

I would ask leave also to inquire, What great advantages can be derived to religion, by endeavoring to limit the extent of the death of Christ, and consequently to take away all manner of hopes, and endeavors, and prayers, from those who are supposed not to be elected? Does the goodness and *special grace* of God acquire any honor by this limitation? No, certainly.

Divine grace is the same toward the elect, whether others are saved or lost. Are the elect any way discouraged by it? Not in the least. But by the contrary doctrine, many persons who are awakened to a sense of sin, and are seeking after Christ for salvation, may be terribly discouraged from receiving his offers of grace, when they are taught to doubt whether there be any grace provided for them, and whether Jesus be appointed to act as *their* Saviour. It may be a means to drive some poor souls to despair when they hear that unless they are elected, they may seek after salvation by Christ in vain, for there is none purchased for them. And it may tempt them to begin at the wrong end, and seek to pry into the counsels of God, before they dare trust in his grace or submit to the Gospel of Christ.

Now, if many inconveniences may arise from thus limiting the virtue of the blood of Christ, and if no valuable end or advantage to religion can be obtained by this narrow opinion, what should make men so zealous to get the greatest part of the world utterly excluded from all hopes and all salvation!

The great objection against what I have said, is this:—

“If there be only an *outward sufficiency of salvation* provided for them who are not elected, or salvation on condition that they believe, but no *inward sufficiency of grace* to change their hearts, and enable them to believe, the event will be the same as if no salvation were pro-

vided ; since they themselves cannot believe being by nature *dead in sin*."

I answer, It is true, no sinner can believe but by the almighty power of God. And therefore such are said to be *dead in sin* ; and the necessity of a divine power to raise them from this *spiritual death* is held forth in many places of Scripture. Yet we must say still, that sinners are not under such an impossibility of believing, as if they were naturally dead. For if they were, there would be no manner of need or use of any *moral means or motives*, such as commands, promises, threatenings, exhortations : these would all be impertinent and absurd. For they could have no more influence on sinners, than if we commanded or exhorted a dead body to rise or move ; which commands and exhortations would appear ridiculous and useless. Since therefore the blessed God in his word does use these *moral means and motives* to call sinners to faith and repentance, it is certain there is *power sufficient* given them to hear and obey the call. And that they are not under any *necessity of continuing in sin*, and of being destroyed.

With regard to faith, or believing in Christ, in particular, our Saviour thus explains his own words. In one place he saith, "No man can come unto me, except my Father draw him ;" and in another place he charges the Jews with this as their fault, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life."

Let this then be constantly maintained, that

there is not only an *outward sufficiency of salvation* provided, through the merits and death of Christ, for every one who *repents and believes the Gospel*; but also that there is an *inward sufficiency of power* given by God to every one, to harken to the calls of God's grace, and by faith to receive that salvation. And thus much is sufficient to maintain the sincerity of God, in his universal offers of salvation through Christ, and his many commands to all men every where to repent and believe the Gospel; as well as to vindicate his equity at the great day, in condemning the impenitent and unbeliever. For since there was both an outward and inward sufficiency for their recovery, their death lies at their own door, being wholly owing to their wilful, obstinate rejection of God and Christ, and his salvation.

I have only this to add: If serious Christians are but desirous to come as near each other as they can, if they are but willing to be reconciled to one another as far as the present dark-nesses and difficulties will allow; may they not heartily embrace one another, notwithstanding some difference in their sentiments? Surely the desire to do this will take away a thousand cavils and contentions, and a thousand unchristian reproaches from the lips and pens of those who profess to worship the same God, to believe in the same Saviour, to hope for the operations of the same blessed Spirit, and who desire to ascribe their salvation to the same grace of God, who is blessed for evermore! Amen.

## **TRACT IV.**

### **SCRIPTURE DOCTRINES**

**OF**

### **PREDESTINATION, ELECTION, AND REPROBATION.**

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1. **THE** Scripture saith, Ephes. i, 4, "God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." And St. Peter calls the saints, 1 Pet. i, 2, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience." And St. Paul saith unto them, 2 Thess. ii, 13, 14, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he hath called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. From all these places of Scripture it is plain that God hath chosen some to life and glory before or from the foundation of the world. And the wisdom of all Christians is, to labor that their judgments may be informed herein, according to the Scripture. And to that end, let us consider the manner of God's speaking to the sons of men.

3. God saith to Abraham, Rom. iv, 17, "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many

nations, before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were." Observe, God speaks then, at that present time, to Abraham, saying, "I have made thee a father of many nations," notwithstanding Abraham was not, at that time, the father of one child but Ishmael. How then must we understand, "I have made thee a father of many nations?"

4. The apostle tells us plainly, it was so "before God who calleth things that are not as though they were." And so he calleth "Abraham the father of many nations," though he was not as yet the father even of Isaac, in whom his seed was to be called.

5. God useth the same manner of speaking when he calleth Christ, Rev. xiii, 8, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" although indeed he was not slain for some thousand years after. Hence therefore we may easily understand what he speaketh of "electing us from the foundation of the world."

6. God calleth "Abraham a father of many nations," though not so at that time. He calleth "Christ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," though not slain till he was a man in the flesh. Even so he calleth men "elected from the foundation of the world," though not elected till they were men in the flesh. Yet it is all so before God, who, knowing all things from eternity, "calleth things that are not as though they were."

7. By all which it is clear, that as Christ was



called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and yet not slain till some thousand years after, till the day of his death, so also men are called "elect from the foundation of the world," and yet not elected, perhaps, till some thousand years after, till the day of their conversion to God.

8. And indeed this is plain, without going farther from those very words of St. Peter, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience."

For, if the elect are chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, then they were not chosen before they were sanctified by the Spirit. But they were not sanctified by the Spirit before they had a being. It is plain then neither were they chosen from the foundation of the world. But God calleth "things that are not as though they were."

9. This is also plain from those words of St. Paul, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Now,

If the saints are chosen to salvation, through believing of the truth, and were called to believe that truth by hearing of the Gospel, then they were not chosen before they believed the truth, and before they heard the Gospel, whereby they were called to believe. But they were chosen through belief of the truth, and called to believe it by the Gospel. Therefore they were not chosen before they believed; much less before

they had a being, any more than Christ was slain before he had a being. So plain is it that they were not elected till they believed, although God "calleth things that are not as though they were."

10. Again, how plain is it where St. Paul saith, that they whom, Ephes. i, 11, 12, "God did predestinate, according to the counsel of his own will, to be to the praise of his own glory," were such as did *first trust in Christ*? And in the very next verse he saith, that they trusted in Christ *after they heard the word of truth*, not before. But they did not hear the word before they were born. Therefore it is plain, the act of electing is *in time*, though known of God before; who, according to his knowledge, often speaketh of the things "which are not as though they were." And thus is the great stumbling block about election taken away, that men may "make their calling and election sure."

11. The Scripture tells us plainly what predestination is: it is God's foreappointing obedient believers to salvation, not without, but "according to his foreknowledge" of all their works "from the foundation of the world." And so likewise he predestinates or foreappoints all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, not without, but "according to his foreknowledge" of all their works "from the foundation of the world."

12. We may consider this a little farther. God, from the foundation of the world, fore-

knew all men's believing or not believing. And according to this his foreknowledge, he chose or elected all obedient believers, as such, to salvation, and refused or *reprobated* all disobedient unbelievers, as such, to damnation. Thus the Scriptures teach us to consider *election and reprobation*, "according to the foreknowledge of God, from the foundation of the world."

13. But here some may object, that I hold our faith and obedience to be the cause of God's electing us to glory.

I answer, I do hold, that faith in Christ producing obedience to him, is *a cause without which* God elected none to glory; for we never read of God's electing to glory any who lived and died a disobedient unbeliever. But I do not hold, that it is the cause *for which* he elects any: the contrary of this is easily shown, thus:—

Suppose my obedience is a cause of my election to salvation, what is the cause of my obedience?

*Answer.* My love to Christ.

But what is the cause of my love to Christ?

*Answer.* My faith in Christ.

But what is the cause of my faith in Christ?

*Answer.* The preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

But what is the cause of the preaching of the Gospel to us?

*Answer.* Christ dying for us?

But what is the cause of Christ dying for us?

*Answer.* God's great love of pity wherewith

he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.

14. Thus all men may see that I do not hold, God chose any man to life and salvation for any good which he had done, or for any which was in him, before he put it there. And this I shall now show more at large from the oracles of God.

1. God's great love of pity wherewith he loved the sons of men, even while they were dead in trespasses and sins, was the cause of his sending his son to die for them; as appears from the following scriptures; John iii, 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." For, Romans v, 6, &c. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

2. Christ's dying for our sins is the cause of the Gospel's being preached to us, as appears from these scriptures, Matt. xxviii, 18, "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." Mark xvi, 15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

3. The Gospel's being preached to sinners is the cause of their believing, as appears from these scriptures, Romans x, 15, &c. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not

believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

4. Men's believing in the cause of their justification, as appears from these scriptures, Acts xiii, 39, "By him all that believe are justified from all things." Rom. iii, 26, &c. "He is the justifier of all that believe in Jesus. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Rom. iv. 3, 23, &c. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification."

5. Our knowing ourselves justified by faith, is the cause of our love to Christ, as appears from these scriptures, 1 John iv, 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Ib. ver. 19, "We love him, because he first loved us."

6. Our love to Christ is the cause of our obeying him, as appears from these scriptures, John xiv, 15, 21, &c. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." And, "If any man love me, he will keep my words." 1 John v, 3, "For this

is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

7. Our obeying Christ is the cause of his giving us eternal life, as appears from these scriptures, Matt. vii, 21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Rev. xxii, 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And, Heb. v, 9, "Christ being made perfect through sufferings, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.

15. This may be more briefly expressed thus.

1. God's love was the cause of his sending his Son to die for sinners.

2. Christ's dying for sinners is the cause of the Gospel's being preached.

3. The preaching of the Gospel is the cause, or means, of our believing.

4. Our believing is the cause, or condition, of our justification.

5. The knowing ourselves justified through his blood, is the cause of our love to Christ.

6. Our love to Christ is the cause of our obedience to him.

7. Our obedience to Christ is the cause of his becoming the author of eternal salvation to us.

16. These following things therefore ought well to be considered by all that fear God:—

1. There was a necessity of God's love in

sending his son to die for us, without which he had not come to die.

2. There was a necessity of Christ's love in dying for us, without which the Gospel could not have been preached.

3. There was a necessity of the Gospel's being preached, without which there could have been no believing.

4. There is a necessity of our believing the Gospel, without which we cannot be justified.

5. There is a necessity of our being justified by faith in the blood of Christ, without which we cannot come to know that he "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

6. There is a necessity of knowing his love, who first loved us, without which we cannot love him again.

7. There is a necessity of our loving him, without which we cannot keep his commandments.

8. There is a necessity of our keeping his commandments, without which we cannot enter into eternal life.

By all of which we see, that there is as great a necessity of our keeping the commandments of God, as there was of God's sending his Son into the world, or of Christ's dying for our sins.

17. But for whose sins did Christ die? Did he die for *all* men, or but for *some*?

To this also I shall answer by the Scriptures, showing, 1. The testimony of all the prophets. 2. Of the angel of God. 3. Of Christ himself. And 4. Of his apostles.

*First*, The Prophet Isaiah saith thus, chap.

liii, 4, 5, 6, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet did we esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us *all*." Thus Isaiah showeth plainly, that the iniquities of all those who went astray were laid upon Christ. And to him the testimony of all the other prophets agreeth : Acts x, 43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." The same saith that great prophet, John the Baptist, who, John i, 7, "came to bear witness of the light, that *all* men through it might believe."

And again, i, 29, "Behold, (saith he,) the Lamb of *God*, that taketh away the sin of the *world*." Thus have all the prophets, with one consent, testified that God *laid upon* Christ *the iniquities* of all that were *gone astray* ; that he is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world ; that all men through him may believe ;" and that "through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

*Secondly*, The angel of God testifieth the same thing, saying, Luke ii, 10, "Fear not, for I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," which was that there



was "born unto them a Saviour, even Christ the Lord." By this also it appears, that Christ died for all men. For else it could not have been glad tidings of great joy to all people; but rather sad tidings to all those for whom he died not.

*Thirdly*, We come now to the words of Christ himself, who knew his own business better than any man else; and therefore if his testimony agree with these, we must needs be convinced that they are true. Now he speaks thus: John iii, 14, &c, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Thus we see the words of Christ agree with the words of the prophets; therefore it must needs be owned that Christ died for all.

*Fourthly*, And now we will hear what the apostles say concerning this thing; 2 Cor. v, 14, &c: "The love of Christ," saith the Apostle Paul, "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." And to Timothy he saith, 1 Timothy ii, 5, 6, "There is one God, and one Mediator between

God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Again he saith to Titus, chap. ii, 11, "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared." And yet again to the Hebrews, Heb. ii, 9, "That he by the grace of God tasted death for every man." And to this agreeth St. John, witnessing, 1 John ii, 2, "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." And again, speaking of himself and the rest of the apostles, he saith, 1 John iv, 14, "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Thus we have the testimony of all the prophets, of the angel of God, of Christ himself, and of his holy apostles, all agreeing together in one, to prove that Christ died for all mankind.

18. What then can they, who deny this, say? Why, they commonly say, *All men* in these scriptures does not mean *all men*, but only the *elect*; that *every man* here, does not mean every man, but only every one of the elect; that the *world* does not mean the *whole world*, but only the world of believers; and that the *whole world*, in St. John's words, does not mean the *whole world*, but only the whole world of the elect.

19. To this shameless, senseless evasion, I answer thus:—

If the Scripture no where speaks of a world of believers or elect, then we have no ground, reason, pretence, or excuse for saying, Christ

died only for a world of believers or elect. But the Scripture no where speaks of such a world. Therefore we have no ground or pretence for speaking thus.

Nay, the Scripture is so far from calling believers or elected persons the world, that they are every where in Scripture plainly and expressly distinguished from the world: John xv, 19, "If ye were of the world, (saith Christ,) the world would love its own; but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

20. But let the Scripture itself speak, what world Christ died for: Rom. v, 6-10, "When we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." From all which we may clearly see, that Christ died for the world of the ungodly, for the world of sinners, for the world of his enemies, the Just One for the world of the unjust. But the elect, as elect, are not unjust. Therefore he died not for the elect, as elect; but even for that world St. John speaks of, when he says, "The whole world lieth in wickedness."

21. If it be said, "The elect were sinners once as well as others:" I answer, true; but not as they are elect in Christ, but as they were out of Christ, without hope and without God in the world. Therefore to say that Christ died for the elect, as elect, is absolute nonsense and confusion.

22. To put this matter out of doubt, I would commend these following considerations to all sober-minded men :—

1. The Scripture saith, “ Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.’

But the elect, as elect, were not lost.

Therefore Christ died not for the elect, as, or because they were elect; for that had been to seek and save what was found and saved before.

2. The Scripture saith Christ died for the unjust.

But the elect, as such, are not unjust.

Therefore Christ died not for the elect, as elect; for that had been to justify them who were just before.

3. The Scripture saith, “ He came to preach deliverance to the captives.”

But the elect, as elect, are not captives, for Christ hath set them free.

Therefore he died not for the elect, as elect; for that had been to set them at liberty who were at liberty before.

The Scriptures saith, “ He quickened them who were dead in trespasses and in sins, such as were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, without hope and without God in the world.”

But the elect, as such, are not dead in trespasses and sins, but alive unto God. Neither are they without Christ, for they are chosen in him; nor are they aliens from the common-

wealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. But they are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Therefore Christ died not for the elect, as, or because they were elect. For that had been to quicken them that were alive before, and to bring them into covenant who were in covenant before. And thus, by these men's accounts, our Lord lost his labor of love, and accomplished a SOLEMN NOTHING.

13. Thus having shown the grievous folly of those who say, that Christ died for none but the elect, I shall now prove by undeniable reasons that he died for all mankind.

*Reason 1.* Because all the prophets, the angel of God, Christ himself, and his holy apostles, with one consent affirm it.

*Reason 2.* Because there is not one scripture from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, that denies it, either negatively, by saying that he did not die for all; or affirmatively, by saying that he died but for some.

*Reason 3.* Because he himself commanded, that the Gospel should be preached to every creature.

*Reason 4.* Because he calleth all men, every where, to repent.

*Reason 5.* Because those who perish are damned for not believing in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Therefore he must have died for them. Else they would be damned for not believing a lie.

*Reason 6.* Because they which are damned

might have been saved. For thus saith the word of God, 2 Thess. ii, 10, "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie, that they may be damned."

*Reason 7.* Because some deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. But they could not deny the Lord that bought them, if he had not bought them at all.

24. I shall now briefly show the dreadful absurdities that follow from saying Christ died only for the elect.

1. If Christ died not for all, then unbelief is no sin in them that finally perish; seeing there is not any thing for those men to believe unto salvation, for whom Christ died not.

2. If Christ died not for all, then it would be a sin in the greatest part of mankind to believe he died for them; seeing it would be to believe a lie.

3. If Christ died not for those that are damned, then they are not damned for unbelief. Otherwise, you say that they are damned for not believing a lie.

4. If Christ died not for all, then those who obey Christ, by going and preaching the Gospel to every creature, as glad tidings of grace and peace, of great joy to all people, do sin thereby, in that they go to most people with a lie in their mouth.

5. If Christ died not for all men, then God is

not in earnest in calling all men every where to repent; for what good could repentance do those for whom Christ died not?

6. If Christ died not for all, then why does he say he is not willing any should perish? Surely he is willing, yea, resolved that most men should perish; else he would have died for them also.

7. How shall God judge the world by the man Christ Jesus, if Christ did not die for the world? Or how shall he judge them according to the Gospel, when there was never any Gospel or mercy for them?

25. But, say some, "If Christ died for all, why are not all saved?"

I answer, Because they believe not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Because God called and they refused to answer; he stretched out his hand and they regarded not; he counselled them, but they would none of his counsels; he reprov'd them, but they set at nought all his reproofs; they followed after lying vanities, and forsook their own mercies; they denied the Lord that bought them, and so brought upon themselves swift destruction: and because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; therefore (if you would know wherefore) God gave them up to believe a lie, and to be damned. How often, saith our Lord, would I have gathered you together, and ye would not. Ye would not. Here is the plain reason why all men are not saved. For God promiseth no man salvation,

whether he will or no ; but leaveth them to everlasting destruction, who will not believe and obey the Gospel.

“O then you are an Arminian ! You are a free willer. You hold free will in man !”

I hold nothing but what the Scripture saith ; and that you should give me leave to hold. I do not hold that any man has any will or power of himself to do any thing that is good ; but by the grace of God we may do all things. I have already shown, he hath given Christ for all men. And he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things ? And what man knoweth not, that if he make use of all the will and power God hath given him, God will double his talent and give him more ? If any therefore desire to have more, let him faithfully improve what he has. Likewise what man is he, who doth not know that he is not condemned for not doing what he could not do, but for leaving undone what he could have done if he would. Let any man deny it if he can.

27. “What, then, may all men be saved if they will ?” Before I answer this question directly, I shall show that those who ask it are themselves compelled to grant as much freedom of will as we desire to plead for.

For, 1. The assembly of divines, in their Confession of Faith, chap. 9, do expressly say, “God hath endowed the will of man with that natural liberty, that is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity determined to do good or evil.”



2. Mr. Baxter, in the preface of his *Call to the Unconverted*, says, "That Calvin, as well as Arminius, held free will; and that no man of brains denieth that man hath a will that is naturally free: it is free from violence, it is a self-determining principle." Sure, here is as much said for free will, as any man need to say, and perhaps more. For,

The difference between us is this: They say, "Man hath a will which is naturally free." We say, "Man hath his freedom of will, not naturally, but by grace."

We believe, that in the moment Adam fell, he had no freedom of will left; but that God, when of his own free grace he gave the promise of a Saviour to him and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of proffered salvation. And in all this, man's boasting is excluded; the whole of that which is good in him, even from the first moment of his fall, being of grace and not of nature. And now we come directly to the question, Whether all men may be saved if they will?

28. To those who have considered what has been premised, I answer, 1. What should hinder them, if they be willing? For, 2. God is not willing that any should perish: yea, 3. He is willing that all men should be saved. And Christ is willing; for he "came not to judge the world, but to save the world." And how did he weep over Jerusalem? How often would he have gathered them together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would

not. And now what hinders men's salvation but that same, *They would not?*

29. They would not; they will not come at Christ's call, and hearken to his reproof, and wait for his counsels, and receive power from on high to live to him who died for them, walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless, and following him whithersoever he goeth. This way is so narrow that few care to walk therein; and therefore they are not saved, even because *they reject the counsel of God against themselves*. They choose death; therefore they perish everlastingly.

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## TRACT V.

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### FREE GRACE

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“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Rom. viii, 32.

1. How freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, *Christ died for the ungodly*. While we were *dead in sin*, *God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*. And how *freely with him* does he give us all things! Verily free grace is all in all!

2. The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all.

3. First. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man: no, not in any degree; neither in whole nor in part. It does not in any wise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver: not on any thing he has done, or any thing he is. It does not depend on his endeavors. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions. For all these flow from the free grace of God: they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all, that is, no way depending on any power, or merit in man; but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and *with him freely giveth us all things*.

4. But is it free for all, as well as in all? To this some have answered, "No: it is free only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of mankind God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and therefore before they were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this he absolutely decreed, because so was his good pleasure; because it was his sovereign will. Accordingly, they are born to this, to be destroyed body and soul in hell. And they grow up under the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption. For what grace God gives,

he gives only for this, to increase, not prevent their damnation."

5. This is that decree of predestination. But methinks I hear one say, "This is not the predestination which I hold." I hold only, "the election of grace. What I believe is no more than this, that God, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Now all these will be saved, and none else. For the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves. So they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, which are only evil continually, and waxing worse and worse, are at length justly punished with everlasting destruction."

6. Is this all the predestination which you hold? Consider. Perhaps this is not all. Do not you believe, "God ordained them to this very thing?" If so, you believe the whole decree; you hold predestination in the full sense, which has been above described. But it may be you think you do not. Do not you then believe God hardens the hearts of them that perish? Do not you believe he (literally) hardened Pharaoh's heart, and that for this end he raised him up (or created him?) Why, this amounts to just the same thing. If you believe Pharaoh, or any one man upon the earth, was created for this end, to be damned, you hold all that has been said of predestination. And there is no need you should add, that God seconds his decree, which is supposed unchangeable and irresistible, by hardening the hearts of those

vessels of wrath, whom that decree had before fitted for destruction.

7. Well, but it may be you do not believe even this. You do not hold any decree of reprobation. You do not think God decrees any man to be damned, nor hardens, or irresistibly fits him for damnation. You only say, "God eternally decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, *Live*, and to others he would not. That, consequently, these should be made alive, and those abide in death : these should glorify God by their salvation, and those by their destruction."

8. Is not this what you mean by *the election of grace*? If it be, I would ask one or two questions. Are any who are not thus elected, saved? Or were any, from the foundation of the world? Is it possible any man should be saved, unless he be thus elected? If you say *no*, you are but where you was. You are not advanced one hair's breadth farther. You still believe, that in consequence of an unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, the greater part of mankind abide in death, without any possibility of redemption; inasmuch as none can save them but God; and he will not save them. You believe he hath absolutely decreed not to save them; and what is this but decreeing to damn them? It is in effect, neither more nor less; it comes to the same thing. For if you are dead, and altogether unable to make yourself alive; then if God has absolutely decreed, he will make only others alive and not you; he hath

absolutely decreed your everlasting death; you are absolutely consigned to damnation. So then, though you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing; and God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your own account of it, amounts to neither more nor less than what others call "God's decree of reprobation."

9. Call it therefore by whatever name you please, "election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation," it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this, "By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved."

10. But if this be so, then is all preaching vain. It is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore the end of preaching, "to save souls," is void with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved. They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void with regard to them likewise. So that in either case, our preaching is vain, as your hearing is also vain.

11. This then is a plain proof that the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God;

and God is not divided against himself. A second is, that it directly tends to destroy that holiness which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, "none who hold it are holy." (For God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors of any kind.) But that the doctrine itself, "that every man is either elected or not elected from eternity, and that the one must inevitably be saved, and the other inevitably damned," has a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general. For it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it so frequently proposed in Scripture, the hope of future reward and fear of punishment. The hope of heaven and fear of hell. That "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and those into life eternal," is no motive to him to struggle for life, who believes his lot is cast already : it is not reasonable for him so to do if he thinks he is unalterably adjudged either to life or death. You will say, "But he knows not whether it is life or death." What then ? This helps not the matter. For if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is unreasonable for him to take any physic at all. He might justly say, (and so I have heard some speak, both in bodily sickness and in spiritual,) "If I am ordained to life, I shall live ; if to death, I shall die ; so I need not trouble myself about it." So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, to hinder unholy men from

ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat.

12. As directly does this doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness. Such are meekness and love: love, I mean, of our enemies, of the evil and unthankful. I say not that none who hold it have meekness and love: (for as is the power of God so is his mercy.) But that it naturally tends to inspire or increase a sharpness or eagerness of temper, which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ: as then especially appears, when they are opposed on this head. And it as naturally inspires contempt or coldness toward those whom we suppose outcasts from God. "O, (but you say,) I suppose no particular man a reprobate." You mean, you would not if you could help it. You cannot help sometimes applying your general doctrine to particular persons. The enemy of souls will apply it for you. You know how often he has done so. "But you rejected him thought with abhorrence." True; as soon as you could. But how did it sour and sharpen your spirit in the mean time! You well know it was not the spirit of love which you then felt toward that poor sinner, whom you supposed or suspected, whether you would or to have been hated of God from eternity.

3. Thirdly. This doctrine tends to destroy comfort of religion, the happiness of Christy: this is evident as to all those who be themselves to be reprobated, or who only act or fear it. All the great and precious



promises are lost to them. They afford them no ray of comfort. "For they are not the elect of God. Therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them." This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or happiness even in that religion, whose *ways* were designed to be *ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.*

14. And as to you who believe yourselves the elect of God, what is your happiness? I hope not a notion, a speculative belief; a bare opinion of any kind; but a feeling possession of God in your hearts, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost; or, "the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God." This, otherwise termed *the full assurance of faith*, is the true ground of a Christian's happiness. And it does indeed imply a full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God. But it does not necessarily imply a full assurance of our future perseverance. I do not say, this is never joined to it, but that it is not necessarily implied therein; for many have the one who have not the other.

15. Now this witness of the Spirit experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine; and not only in those who, believing themselves reprobated by this belief, thrust it far from them; but even in them that have *tasted of that good gift*, who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubt, and fears, and darkness, *horrible darkness that might be felt.* And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine, to say between God and your own hearts, whether you

have not often a return of doubts and fears concerning your election or perseverance? If you ask, who has not? I answer, very few of those that hold this doctrine. But many, very many of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth: many of those who know and feel they are in Christ to-day, and *take no thought for the morrow*; who *abide in him* by faith from hour to hour, or rather from moment to moment. Many of these have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years to this day.

16. That assurance of faith which these enjoy, excludes all doubt and fear. It excludes all kind of doubt and fear, concerning their future perseverance; though it is not properly (as was said before) an assurance of what is future, but only of what now is. And this needs not for its support a speculative belief, that whoever is once ordained to life must live. For it is wrought from hour to hour by the mighty power of God, "by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." And therefore that doctrine is not of God; because it tends to obstruct, if not destroy, this great work of the Holy Ghost, whence flows the chief comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity."

17. Again, how uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offence or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burn-

ings? How peculiarly uncomfortable must it be to those who have put on Christ? To those who, being filled with "bowels of mercy, tenderness, and compassion, could even wish themselves accursed for their brethren's sake."

18. Fourthly. This uncomfortable doctrine directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works. And this it does, first, as it naturally tends (according to what was observed before) to destroy our love to the greater part of mankind, namely, the evil and unthankful. For whatever lessens our love must so far lessen our desire to do them good. This it does, secondly, as it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, viz. the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their temporal wants who are just dropping into eternal fire? "Well; but run and snatch them as brands out of the fire." Nay, this you suppose impossible. They were appointed thereunto, you say, from eternity, before they had done either good or evil. You believe it is the will of God they should die. And "who hath resisted his will?" But you say, "You do not know whether these are elected or not." What then? If you know they are one or the other, that they are either elected or not elected, all your labor is void and vain. In either case your advice, reproof, or exhortation, is as needless and useless as our preaching. It is needless to them that are elected; for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless

to them that are not elected; for with or without it, they will infallibly be damned.—Therefore you cannot, consistently with your principles, take any pains about their salvation. Consequently, those principles directly tend to destroy your zeal for good works: for all good works; but particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death.

19. But, fifthly. This doctrine not only tends to destroy Christian holiness, happiness, and good works, but hath also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian revelation. The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labor to prove, is, that the Christian revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once show this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, “If it be not necessary, it is not true.” Now this fundamental point you give up. For, supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian revelation were not in being; and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that revelation. And what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the Gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause. “O tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon! Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice, lest the sons of unbelief triumph!”

20. Sixthly. And as this doctrine manifestly and directly tends to overthrow the whole

Christian revelation, so it does the same thing, by plain consequence, in making that revelation contradict itself. For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts (more or fewer it matters not) as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. For instance: the assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God in a literal sense hated Esau, and all the reprobated, from eternity. Now what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts which expressly declare, "God is love?" Again, they infer from the text, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," Rom. ix, 15, that God is love only to some men, viz. the elect, and that he hath mercy for those only: flatly contrary to which is the whole tenor of Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, "The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works," Psalm cxlv, 9. Again, they infer from that and the like texts, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," that he showeth mercy only to those to whom he had respect from all eternity. Nay, but who replieth against God now?—You now contradict the whole oracles of God, which declare, throughout, "God is no respecter of persons," Acts x, 34. "There is no respect of persons

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with him," Rom. ii. 11. Again, from that text, "The children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, (unto Rebecca,) The elder shall serve the younger:" you infer, that our being predestinated, or elected, no way depends on the foreknowledge of God: flatly contrary to this are all the scriptures; and those in particular, "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God," 1 Pet. i, 2; "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," Rom. viii, 29.

21. And, "The same Lord over all is rich in mercy to all that call upon him," Rom. x, 12. But you say, No, he is such only to those for whom Christ died. And those are not all, but only a few, *whom God hath chosen out of the world*: for he died not for all, but only for those who "were chosen in him before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4. Flatly contrary to your interpretation of these scriptures also is the whole tenor of the New Testament; as are in particular those texts, "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died," Rom. xvi, 15. A clear proof that Christ died, not only for those that are saved, but also for them that perish. He is "the Saviour of the world," John iv, 42. He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," John i, 29. "He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii 2. "He (the living God) is *the*

*Saviour of all men,*" 1 Tim. iv, 10. "He gave himself a ransom for all," 1 Tim. ii, 6. "He tasted death for every man," Heb. ii, 9.

22. If you ask, "Why then are not all men saved?" The whole law and the testimony answer, first, not because of any decree of God, not because it is his pleasure they should die. For, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," Ezek. xviii, 32. Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be his will, if the oracles of God are true; for they declare, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Peter iii, 9. He willeth that all men should be saved. And they, secondly, declare, what is the cause why all men are not saved; namely, that they will not be saved: so our Lord expressly saith, "They will not come unto me, that they may have life," John v, 40. "The power of the Lord is present to heal them," but they will not be healed. "They reject the counsel," the merciful counsel of God, against *themselves*, as did their stiff-necked forefathers. And therefore are they without excuse, because God would save them, but they will not be saved; this is the condemnation, "How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii, 37.

23. Thus manifestly does this doctrine tend to overthrow the whole Christian revelation, by making it contradict itself; and by giving such an interpretation of some texts, as flatly con-

tradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. And abundant proof that it is not of God: but neither is this all.

For, seventhly, it is a doctrine full of blasphemy; of such blasphemy as I should dread to mention, but that the honor of our gracious God, and the cause of his truth, will not suffer me to be silent. In the cause of God, then, and from a sincere concern for the glory of his great name, I will mention a few of the horrible blasphemies contained in this horrible doctrine. But, first, I must warn every one of you that hears, as ye will answer it at the great day, not to charge me (as some have done) with blaspheming, because I mention the blasphemy of others. And the more you are grieved with them that do thus blaspheme, see that ye *confirm your love toward them* the more, and that your heart's desire, and continual prayer to God be, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

24. This premised, let it be observed, that this doctrine represents our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, *the righteous, the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth*, as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity. For it cannot be denied, that he every where speaks *as if he was* willing that all men should be saved. Therefore to say *he was not* willing that all men should be saved, is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler. It cannot be denied that the gra-



cious words which came out of his mouth are full of invitations to all sinners. To say, then, he did not intend to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people. You cannot deny that he says, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." If then you say he calls those that cannot come, those whom he knows to be unable to come, those whom he can make able to come, but will not, how is it possible to describe greater insincerity? You represent him as mocking his helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give. You describe him as saying one thing, and meaning another: as pretending the love which he had not. Him *in whose mouth was no guile*, you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity: then, especially, when drawing nigh the city, "he wept over it and said, O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together—and ye would not." (ἠθέλησα καὶ ἐκ' ἡθελήσατε) Now if you say, *they would*, but *he would not*, you represent him (which who could hear?) as weeping crocodile's tears, weeping over the prey which himself had doomed to destruction.

25. Such blasphemy as this, one might think, might make the ears of a Christian to tingle. But there is yet more behind; for just as it honors the Son, so doth this doctrine honor the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once. It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth. Yea, it represents the most holy God as

worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false: because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, "He willeth all men to be saved." More unjust: because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace he will not give them, they cannot avoid: and more cruel, because that unhappy spirit *seeketh rest and findeth none*; so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God *resteth in his high and holy place*; so that to suppose him, of his own mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures, whether they will or no, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the most high God (he that hath ears to hear let him hear!) as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil.

26. This is the blasphemy clearly contained *in the horrible decree* of predestination. And here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every assertor of it. You represent God as worse than the devil: more false, more cruel, more unjust. "But you say you will prove it by Scripture." Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? That God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never can prove this. Whatever its true meaning be, this

cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say, "I know not," you have gained nothing. For there are many scriptures, the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense at all, than to say it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean beside, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works: that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination.

27. This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it,) I abhor the doctrine of predestination: a doctrine, upon the supposition of which, if one could possibly suppose it for a moment, (call it election, reprobation, or what you please, for all comes to the same thing,) one might say to our adversary the devil, "Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer? Thy lying in wait for souls is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearest thou not that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands? And that he doth it much more effectually? Thou, with all thy principalities and powers, canst only so assault that we may resist thee. But he can irresistibly destroy both body and soul in hell! Thou canst only entice. But his unchangeable decree to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin till they drop into everlasting burnings.

T'hou temptest; he forceth us to be damned, for we cannot resist his will. Thou fool, why goest thou about any longer, seeking whom thou mayest devour? Hearest thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men? *Moloch* caused only children to pass through the fire, and that fire was soon quenched; or the corruptible body being consumed, its torment was at an end. But God, thou art told, by his eternal decree, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes not only *children of a span long*, but the parents also, to pass through the fire of hell: the *fire which never shall be quenched*; and the body which is cast thereinto, being now incorruptible and immortal, will be ever consuming, and never consumed: but the *smoke of their torment*, because it is God's good pleasure, *ascendeth up for ever and ever.*"

28. O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say, "To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish. But whither will ye flee! Into heaven? He is there. Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee or stay, I call heaven his throne, and the earth his footstool, to witness against you, ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice, ye that are under the earth! For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken, and devoted

to death thousands of souls, from the rising up of the sun, unto the going down thereof. Here, O death, is thy sting! They shall not, cannot escape: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Here, O grave, is thy victory! Nations yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil, are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever. Let all those morning stars sing together, who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning. Let all the sons of hell shout for joy! For the decree is past, and who shall disannul it?"

29. Yea, the decree is past. And so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this: "I will set before the sons of men life and death, blessing and cursing. And the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." 'This decree, whereby "whom God did foreknow he did predestinate," was indeed from everlasting: this whereby all who suffer Christ to make them alive, are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God," now standeth fast, even as the moon and as the faithful witness in heaven: and when heaven and earth shall pass away, yet this shall not pass away; for it is as unchangeable and eternal as is the being of God who gave it. This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works, and in all holiness: and it is a well-spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God. It is every way consistent with all the perfections of his nature. It gives

us the noblest view both of his justice, mercy, and truth. To this agrees the whole scope of the Christian revelation, as well as the parts thereof. To this Moses and all the prophets bear witness, and our blessed Lord and all his apostles. Thus Moses, in the name of the Lord, "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." Thus Ezekiel, (to cite one prophet for all,) "The soul that sinneth it shall die: the son shall *not bear* (eternally) *the iniquity of the father*," xviii, 20; "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Thus our blessed Lord, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," John vii, 37. Thus his great Apostle St. Paul, Acts xvii, 30; "God commandeth all men, every where, to repent." "*All men, every where*:" every man in every place, without any exception, either of place or person. Thus St. James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James i, 5. Thus St. Peter, 2 Pet. iii, 9; "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and thus St. John, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father—and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii, 1, 2.

30. O hear ye this, ye that forget God! Ye

cannot charge your death upon him. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God," Ezek. xviii, 23, &c.; "Repent and turn from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed—for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezek. xxxiii, 11, &c.

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## PART VI.

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### THE CONSEQUENCE PROVED.

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1. MR. TOPLADY, a young, bold man, lately published a pamphlet, an extract from which was soon after printed, concluding with these words:—

"The sum of all is this: One in twenty, suppose, of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will: the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can."

2. A great outcry has been raised on that account, as though this was not a fair state of the

case ; and it has been vehemently affirmed, that no such consequence follows from the doctrine of absolute predestination.

I calmly affirm it is a fair state of the case ; this consequence does naturally and necessarily follow from the doctrine of absolute predestination, as here stated and defended by bold Mr. Augustus Toplady.

Indeed I have not leisure to consider the matter at large : I can only make a few strictures, and leave the young man to be farther corrected by one that is full his match, Mr. Thomas Olivers.

3. "When love is predicated of God, it implies, (1.) His everlasting will, purpose, and determination to save his people." (*Mr. Toplady's Tract*, chap. 1.) I appeal to all men, whether it is not a natural consequence, even of this, that "all these shall be saved, do what they will."

You may say, "O, but they will only do what is good." Be it so ; yet the consequence stands.

"Election signifies that sovereign, unconditional, immutable act of God, whereby he selected some to be eternally saved." *Immutable, unconditional!* From hence then it undeniably follows, "these shall be saved, do what they will."

Predestination, as relating to the elect, is that irreversible act of the Divine will, whereby God determined to deliver a certain number of men from hell : " *Ergo*, [therefore,] a certain num-



ber shall infallibly be saved, do what they will. Who can deny the consequence?

“Not one of the elect can perish, but they must all necessarily be saved.” (Chap. 3.) Can any assert this, and yet deny that consequence, —therefore all the elect shall be saved, do what they will? unless you would say, it is the proposition itself, rather than a consequence from it.

4. So much for the former part of the question. Let us now consider the latter:—

“Hatred ascribed to God implies a resolution not to have mercy on such and such men. So ‘Esau have I hated;’ that is, I did from all eternity determine not to have mercy on him.” (Chap. 1.) In other words,—

I by my dire decree did seal  
His fix’d, unalterable doom,  
Consign’d his unborn soul to hell,  
And damn’d him from his mother’s womb.

Well, then, does it not follow, by unavoidable consequence, that such and such men, poor hated Esau in particular, “shall be damned, do what they can?”

“Reprobation denotes God’s eternal preterition of some men, and his predestination of them to destruction.” And is it possible for them, by any thing they can do, to prevent that destruction? You say, “No.” It follows, they “shall be damned, do what they can.”

“Predestination, as it regards the reprobate, is that immutable act of God’s will, whereby he hath determined to leave some men to perish.”

And can they avoid it by any thing they do? You affirm they cannot. Again, therefore, it follows, these "shall be damned, do what they can."

"We assert, there is a predestination of particular persons to death, which death they shall inevitably undergo;" that is, "they shall be damned, do what they can."

"The non-elect were predestinated to eternal death." (Chap. 2.) *Ergo*, [therefore,] "they shall be damned, do what they can."

"The condemnation of the reprobate is necessary and inevitable." Surely I need add no more on this head. You see that, "the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can," is the whole burden of the song.

5. Take only two precious sentences more, which include the whole question:—

"We assert, that the number of the elect, and also of the reprobate, is so fixed and determinate, that neither can be augmented or diminished;" (chap. 4;) and, "that the decrees of election and reprobation are immutable and irreversible."

From each of these assertions, the whole consequence follows, clear as the noonday sun, —Therefore, "the elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can."

6. I add a word, with regard to another branch of this kind, charitable doctrine.

Mr. Toplady says, "God has a positive will to destroy the reprobate for their sins." (Chap. 1.) *For their sins!* How can that be? I pos-

itively assert, that (on this scheme) they have no sins at all. They never had ; they can have none. For it cannot be a sin in a spark to rise, or in a stone to fall. And the spark or the stone is not more necessarily determined either to rise or to fall, than the man is to sin, to commit that rape, or adultery, or murder. For " God did, before all time, determine and direct to some particular end, every person or thing, to which he has given, or is yet to give, being." God himself did " predestinate them to fill up the measure of their iniquities ;" such was his sovereign, irresistible decree, before the foundation of the world. *To fill up the measure of their iniquities* : that is, to commit every act which they committed. So " God decreed the Jews to be the crucifiers of Christ, and Judas to betray him." (Chap. 4.) Whose fault was it then ? You plainly say, It was not his fault, but God's. For what was Judas or ten thousand reprobates beside ? Could they resist his decree ? No more than they could pull the sun out of the firmament of heaven. And would God punish them with everlasting destruction, for not pulling the sun out of the firmament ? He might as well do it for this, as for their not doing what (on this supposition) was equally impossible. " But they are punished for their impenitency, sin, and unbelief." Say *unbelief and impenitency*, but not *sin*. For " God had predestinated them to continue in impenitency and unbelief. God had positively ordained them to continue in their blindness and hardness of

heart." Therefore their not repenting and believing was no more a sin, than their not pulling the sun from heaven.

7. Indeed Mr. T. himself owns, "The sins of the reprobate were not the cause of their being passed by; but merely and entirely the sovereign will and determinating pleasure of God."

"O but their sin was the cause of their damnation, though not their preterition;" that is, God determined they should live and die in their sins, that he might afterward damn them!

Was ever any thing like this? Yes, I have read something like it: When Tiberius had determined to destroy Sejanus and all his family, as it was unlawful to put a virgin to death, what could be done with his daughter, a child of nine years old? Why, the hangman was ordered first to deflower, and then to strangle her! Yet even good Tiberius did not order her to be strangled "because she had been deflowered!" If so, it had been a parallel case; it had been just what is here affirmed of the Most High

8. One word more: "I will obviate," says Mr. T., "a fallacious objection, How is reprobation reconcilable with the doctrine of a future judgment? There needs no pains to reconcile these two." *No pains!* Indeed there does; more pains than all the men upon earth, or all the devils in hell, will ever be able to take. But go on: "In the last day, Christ will pass sentence on the non-elect, 1. Not for having done what they could not help; but 2. For their wilful ignorance of divine things; 3. For their

obstinate unbelief; 4. For their omissions of moral duty; and, 5. For their repeated iniquities and transgressions."

He will condemn them, 1. "Not for having done what they could not help." I say, "Yes; for having sinned against God to their lives' end. But this they could not help. He had himself decreed it; he had determined they should continue impenitent. 2. "For their wilful ignorance of divine things." No; their ignorance of God, and the things of God, was not wilful, was not originally owing to their own will, but to the sovereign will of God; his will, not theirs, was the primary cause of their continuing in that ignorance. 3. "For their obstinate unbelief." No; how can it be termed obstinate, when they never had a possibility of removing it? when God had absolutely decreed, before they were born, that they should live and die therein? 4. "For their omissions of moral duty;" that is, for not loving God and their neighbor, which is the sum of the moral law. Was it then ever in their power to love God and their neighbor? No; no more than to touch heaven with their hand. Had not God himself unalterably decreed, that they should not love either God or man? If, therefore, they are condemned for this, they are condemned for what they never could help. 5. "For their repeated iniquities and transgressions." And was it ever in their power to help these? Were they not predestinated thereto before the foundation of the world? How then can the Judge of all the earth consign

them to everlasting fire, for what was in effect his own act and deed?

I apprehend, then, this is no fallacious objection, but a solid and weighty one; and defy any man living, who asserts the unconditional decree of reprobation or preterition (just the same in effect,) to reconcile this with the Scriptural doctrine of a future judgment. I say again, I defy any man on earth to show, how, on this scheme, God can "judge the world in righteousness."

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## TRACT VII.

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### A BLOW AT THE ROOT;

OR,

CHRIST STABBED IN THE HOUSE OF HIS  
FRIENDS.

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Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?  
Luke xxii, 48.


1. "WITHOUT holiness no man shall see the Lord," shall see the face of God in glory. Nothing under heaven can be more sure than this; "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And though heaven and earth pass away, yet his word shall not pass away." As well therefore might God fall from heaven, as his word fall to the ground. No, it cannot be: none shall live with God, but he that now lives to God; none shall enjoy the glory of God in

heaven but he that bears the image of God on earth ; none that is not saved from sin here can be saved from hell hereafter ; none can see the kingdom of God above, unless the kingdom of God be in him below. Whosoever will reign with Christ in heaven, must have Christ reigning in him on earth. He must have "that mind in him which was in Christ," enabling him "to walk as Christ also walked."

2. And yet as sure as this is, and as clearly as it is taught in every part of the Holy Scripture, there is scarce one among all the truths of God, which is less received by men. It was indeed acknowledged in some degree even among the wiser heathens. Some among them allowed, that nothing would please God, but the *sancti recessus mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto* ; "a virtuous, holy mind, and a heart deep dyed with generous honesty." But though they could not deny, yet how easily and effectually did they evade this ! They fancied something else would do as well ; that some rites or ceremonies, some external forms, or glorious actions, would supply the place of inward holiness. So the famous Roman entitles to future happiness, not only the good and virtuous, but all

*Ob patriam pugnando vulnera passos,  
Quique pii vates, et Phæbo digna locuti ;  
Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes.*

[Those wounded in fighting for their country ; eminent poets worthy of Apollo ; or those who have improved life by the invention of useful arts.]



So to fight for their country, to write good verses, or to invent useful arts, was abundantly sufficient, in the judgment of the wisest heathens, to give men a place in heaven !

3. But this would not pass with modern Romans. They despised such gross imaginations. But though they did not allow these, they found out another way to get to heaven without holiness. In the room of them they substituted penances, pilgrimages, praying to saints and angels ; and, above all these, masses for the dead, absolution by a priest, and extreme unction. And these satisfy the Romanists full as well as lustrations did the heathens. Thousands of them make no manner of doubt, but, by a diligent use of these, without any holiness at all, they shall see the Lord in glory.

4. However, Protestants will not be satisfied thus ; they know this hope is no better than a spider's web. They are convinced, that whoever leans on this, leans on the staff of a broken reed. What then can they do ? How shall they hope to see God, without holiness ? Why, by doing no harm, doing good, going to the church and sacrament. And many thousands sit down content with this, believing they are in the high road to heaven.

5. Yet many cannot rest here. They look upon this as the very popery of Protestantism. They well know, that although none can be a real Christian, without carefully abstaining from all evil, using every means of grace, at every opportunity, and doing all possible good to all



men; yet a man may go thus far, may do all this, and be but a heathen still. They know this religion is too superficial; it is but as it were skin deep. Therefore, it is not Christianity; for that lies in the heart; it is worshipping God in spirit and in truth; it is no other than "the kingdom of God within us;" it is the life of God in the soul of man; it is the mind which was in Christ Jesus; it is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

6. Beside, they see that, be this religion shallower or deeper, it does not stand on the right foundation; since "other foundation" for true religion "can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus;" since no one can have the mind which was in Christ, till he is justified by his blood, till he is forgiven and reconciled to God through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And none can be justified, they are well assured, but by faith, even faith alone; seeing "to him" only "that believeth on God who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."

7. What evasion now? What way could Satan take to make all this light of none effect? What could be done when that grand truth, "By grace ye are saved through faith," was more and more generally received? What, indeed, but to persuade the very men who had received it, to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness?" To this end Simon Magus appeared again, and taught, "that Christ had done, as well as suffered, all; that his righteousness being imputed

to us, we need none of our own ; that seeing there was so much righteousness and holiness in him, there needs none in us ; that to think we have any, or to desire or seek any, is to renounce Christ ; that from the beginning to the end of salvation, all is in Christ, nothing in man ; and that those who teach otherwise are legal preachers, and know nothing of the Gospel."

8. This is indeed " a blow at the root," the root of all holiness, all true religion. Hereby Christ is " stabbed in the house of his friends," of those who make the largest professions of loving and honoring him ; the whole design of his death, namely, " to destroy the works of the devil," being overthrown at a stroke. For wherever this doctrine is cordially received, it leaves no place for holiness. It demolishes it from top to bottom ; it destroys it both root and branch. It effectually tears up all desire of it, all endeavor after it. It forbids all such exhortations as might excite those desires, or awaken those endeavors. Nay, it makes men afraid of personal holiness, afraid of cherishing any thought of it, or motion toward it, lest they should deny the faith, and reject Christ and his righteousness : so that, instead of being " zealous of good works," they are a stink in their nostrils. And they are infinitely more afraid of " the works of God," than of " the works of the devil."

9. Here is wisdom ! though not the wisdom of the saints, but wisdom from beneath. Here is the masterpiece of Satan : farther than this

he cannot go. Men are holy without a grain of holiness in them ! holy in Christ, however unholy in themselves ; they are in Christ, without one jot of the mind that was in Christ ; in Christ, though their nature is whole in them. They are " complete in him," though they are, in themselves, as proud, as vain, as covetous, as passionate as ever. It is enough : they may be unrighteous still, seeing Christ has " fulfilled all righteousness."

10. " O ye simple ones, how long will ye love simplicity ?" How long will ye " seek death in the error of your life ?" " Know ye not," whoever teacheth you otherwise, " that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ?" " Be not deceived ;" although there are many [who] lie in wait to deceive, and that under the fair pretence of exalting Christ ;—a pretence which the more easily steals upon you, because " to you he is precious." But as the Lord liveth, " neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." " Such," indeed, " were some of you. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified," as well as " justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." You are really changed ; you are not only accounted, but actually " made righteous." " The law"—the inward power—" of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made" you " free"—really, actually free—" from the law" or power " of sin

and death." This is liberty, true Gospel liberty, experienced by every believer : not freedom from the law of God, or the works of God, but from the law of sin, and the works of the devil. See that ye "stand fast in" this real, not imaginary "liberty, wherewith Christ hath made you free." And take heed ye "be not entangled again," by means of these vain boasters, "in the yoke of" that vile "bondage to sin," from which ye are now clean escaped. I testify unto you, that if you still continue in sin, Christ shall profit you nothing ; that Christ is no Saviour to you, unless he saves you from your sins ; and that unless it purify your heart, faith shall profit you nothing. O when will ye understand, that to oppose either inward or outward holiness, under color of exalting Christ, is directly to act the part of Judas, to "betray the Son of man with a kiss?" Repent, repent ! lest he cut you in sunder with the two-edged sword that cometh out of his mouth ! It is you yourselves that, by opposing the very end of his coming into the world, are crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame. It is you that, by expecting to see the Lord without holiness, through the righteousness of Christ, "make the blood of the covenant an unholy thing," keeping those unholy that so trust in it. O beware ! for evil is before you. If those who name not the name of Christ, and die in their sins, shall be punished seven fold, surely, you who thus make Christ a minister of sin, shall be punished seventy-and-seven fold. What ! make Christ

destroy his own kingdom? make Christ a factor for Satan? set Christ against holiness? talk of Christ as saving his people in their sins? It is no better than to say, He saves them from the guilt, and not from the power, of sin. Will you make the righteousness of Christ such a cover for the unrighteousness of man? So that by this means, "the unrighteous" of every kind "shall inherit the kingdom of God!" Stop! Consider! What are you doing? You did run well: who hath bewitched you? Who hath corrupted you from the simplicity of Christ, from the purity of the Gospel? You did know, "He that believeth is born of God: and whosoever is born of God sinneth not;" but while "he keepeth himself, that wicked one toucheth him not." O come back to the true, the pure, the old Gospel! that which ye received in the beginning. Come back to Christ, who died to make you a holy people, "zealous of good works." "Remember from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works." Your "Father worketh hitherto:" do ye work; else your faith is vain. For "wilt thou know, O vain," O empty "man, that faith without works is dead?" Wilt thou know that "though I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing?" Wilt thou know, that all the blood and righteousness of Christ, unless "that mind be in thee which was in him," and thou likewise "walk as Christ walked," will only increase thy damnation? "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome

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words, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about strife of words, whereof come railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth. Be no longer afraid of the strongest exhortations either to inward or outward holiness. Hereby God the Father is glorified, and God the Son truly exalted. Do not stupidly and senselessly call this *legal*,—a silly, unmeaning word. Be not afraid of being “under the law of God,” but of being under “the law of sin. Love the strictest preaching best; that which most searches the heart, and shows you wherein you are unlike Christ; and that which presses you most to love him with all your heart, and serve him with all your strength.

11. Suffer me to warn you of another silly, unmeaning word: Do not say, “I can do nothing.” If so, then you know nothing of Christ; then you have no faith: for if you have, if you believe, then you “can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you.” You can love him and keep his commandments; and to you his “commandments are not grievous.” *Grievous to them that believe!* Far from it. They are the joy of your heart. Show then your love to Christ by keeping his commandments, by walking in all his ordinances blameless. Honor Christ by obeying him with all your might, by serving him with all your strength. Glorify Christ by imitating Christ in all things, by walking as he walked. Keep to Christ by

keeping in all his ways. Trust in Christ, to live and reign in your heart. Have confidence in Christ that he will fulfil in you all his great and precious promises, that he will work in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and all the work of faith with power. Cleave to Christ, till his blood have cleansed you from all pride, all anger, all evil desire. Let Christ do all. Let him that has done all for you, do all in you. Exalt Christ as a Prince to give repentance ; a Saviour both to give remission of sins, and to create in you a new heart, to renew a right spirit within you. This is the Gospel, the pure, genuine Gospel ; glad tidings of great salvation. Not the new, but the old, the everlasting Gospel, the Gospel not of Simon Magus, but of Jesus Christ. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ give you, “ according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that, being rooted and grounded in love, ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height ; and to know that love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God !”

## **TRACT VIII.**

### **A DIALOGUE**

**BETWEEN**

**A PREDESTINARIAN AND HIS FRIEND.**

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**Out of thine own mouth !**

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**TO ALL PREDESTINARIANS.**

1. I AM informed some of you have said, that the following quotations are false ; that these words were not spoken by these authors ; others, that they were not spoken in this sense ; and others, that neither you yourself, nor any true Predestinarian, ever did, or ever would, speak so.

2. My friends, the authors here quoted are well known, in whom you may read the words with your own eyes. And you who have read them, know in your own conscience, they were spoken in this sense, and no other ; nay, that this sense of them is professedly defended throughout the whole treatises whence they are taken.

3. But, be this as it may, do you indeed say, " No true Predestinarian ever did or would speak so ? " Why every true Predestinarian must speak so, and so must you yourself too,



if you dare speak out, unless they and you renounce your fundamental principle.

4. Your fundamental principle is this : " God from eternity ordained whatsoever should come to pass." But from this single position undeniably follows every assertion hereafter mentioned. It remains therefore only that you choose which you please (for one you must choose) of these three things : either, 1. To equivocate, evade the question, and prevaricate without end ; or, 2. To swallow all these assertions together, and honestly to avow them ; or, 3. To renounce them all together, and believe in Christ the Saviour of all.

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FRIEND. Sir, I have heard that you make God the author of all sin, and the destroyer of the greater part of mankind without mercy.

PREDESTINARIAN. I deny it ; I only say, " God did from all eternity unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass." (*Assembly's Catechism*, chap. 3.)

Friend. Do you make no exception ?

Pred. No, surely ; for " nothing is more absurd than to think any thing at all is done but by the ordination of God." (*Calvin's Institutes*, Book i, chap. 16, sect. 3.)

Friend. Do you extend this to the actions of men ?

Pred. Without doubt : " Every action and motion of every creature is so governed by the

hidden counsel of God, that nothing can come to pass, but what was ordained by him." (*Ibid.* sect. 3.)

Friend. But what then becomes of the wills of men ?

Pred. "The wills of men are so governed by the will of God, that they are carried on straight to the mark which he has foreordained." (*Ibid.* sect. 8.)

Friend. I suppose you mean the permissive will of God ?

Pred. No : I mean, "all things come to pass by the efficacious and irresistible will of God." (*Dr. Twissi Vindiciæ Gratiæ Potestatis & Providentiæ Dei. Editio Jensoniana.* pars. 3, p. 19.)

Friend. Why, then, all men must do just what they do ?

Pred. True : "It is impossible that any thing should ever be done, but that to which God impels the will of man." (*Ibid.* p. 19.)

Friend. But does not this imply the necessity of all events ?

Pred. "I will not scruple to own that the will of God lays a necessity on all things, and that every thing he wills necessarily comes to pass." (*Calvin's Inst.* b. 3, c. 24, sec. 8.)

Friend. Does sin then necessarily come to pass ?

Pred. Undoubtedly : for "the almighty power of God extends itself to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men." (*Assembly's Catechism*, c. 5.)

Friend. I grant, God foresaw the first man would fall.

Pred. Nay, "God not only foresaw that Adam would fall, but also ordained that he should." (*Calvin's Inst.* b. 3, c. 23, sec. 7.)

Friend. I know God permitted Adam's fall.

Pred. I tell you, "he fell not only by the permission, but also by the appointment, of God." (*Calvini Responsio ad Calumnias Nebulonis cujusdam ad Articulum primum.*) "He sinned because God so ordained, because the Lord saw good." (*Calvin's Inst.* b. 3, c. 24, sec. 8.)

Friend. But do not those who differ from you, raise many objections against you as to this point?

Pred. Yes: "Those poisonous dogs vomit out many things against God." (*Ibid.* b. 3, c. 23, sec. 2.) "They deny that the Scripture says God decreed Adam's fall. They say he might have chose either to fall or not; and that God foreordained only to treat him according to his desert: as if God had created the noblest of all his creatures, without foreordaining what should become of him!" (*Ibid.* sec. 7.)

Friend. Did God then make Adam on purpose that he might fall?

Pred. Undoubtedly. "God made Adam and Eve to this very purpose, that they might be tempted and led into sin. And, by force of his decree, it could not otherwise be but they must sin." (*Piscatoris Disput. Prædest. Præf.* p. 6.)

Friend. But do not you ground God's decree on God's foreknowledge rather than his will?

Pred. No : " God foresees nothing but what he has decreed, and his decree precedes his knowledge." (*Piscat Disput. Prædest.*)

Friend. Well, this may truly be termed, a *horrible decree*.

Pred. " I confess it is a horrible decree ; yet no one can deny but God foreknew Adam's fall, and therefore foreknew it, because he had ordained it so by his own decree." (*Calv. Inst.* l. 3, c. 23, sec. 7.)

Friend. Do you believe, then, that God has by his own positive decree, not only elected some men to life, but also reprobated all the rest ?

Pred. Most surely, if I believe one, I believe the other. " Many indeed (thinking to excuse God) own election, and yet deny reprobation ; but this is quite silly and childish. For without reprobation, election itself cannot stand ; whom God passes by, those he reprobates." (*Calv. Inst.* b. 3, c. 23, sec. 1.)

Friend. Pray explain what you mean by election and reprobation.

Pred. With all my heart. " All men are not created for the same end ; but some are foreordained to eternal life ; others to eternal damnation. So according as every man was created for the one end or the other, we say he was elected or predestinated to life, or reprobated, that is, predestinated to destruction." (*Ibid.* c. 21, sec. 1.)

Friend. Pray, repeat your meaning.

Pred " God hath once for all appointed by

an eternal and unchangeable decree, to whom he would give salvation, and whom he would devote to destruction." (*Ibid.* sec. 7.)

Friend. Did God make any man on purpose that he might be damned?

Pred. Did not I tell you before? "God's first constitution was, that some should be destined to eternal ruin; and to this end their sins were ordained, and denial of grace in order to their sins." (*Zanchius de Natura Dei*, pp. 553, 554.)

Friend. But is not God's predestinating men to life or death grounded on his foreknowledge?

Pred. "So the vulgar think; that God, as he foresees every man will deserve, elects them to life, or devotes them to death and damnation." (*Calv. Inst.* b. 3, c. 22, sec. 1.)

Friend. And do not you think that reprobation, at least, is grounded on God's foreknowing men's sins?

Pred. No indeed: "God of his own good pleasure ordains that many should be born, who are from the womb devoted to inevitable damnation. If any man pretend that God's foreknowledge lays them under no necessity of being damned, but rather that he decreed their damnation, because he foreknew their wickedness, I grant that God's foreknowledge alone lays no necessity on the creature; but eternal life and death depend on the will rather than the foreknowledge of God. If God only foreknew all things that relate to all men, and did not decree and ordain them also, then it might be inquired

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whether or no his foreknowledge necessitates the thing foreknown. But seeing he therefore foreknows all things that will come to pass, because he has decreed they shall come to pass, it is vain to contend about foreknowledge, since it is plain all things come to pass by God's positive decree." (*Ibid.* c. 23, sec. 6.)

Friend. But if God has positively decreed to damn the greater part of mankind, why does he call upon them to repent and be saved?

Pred. "As God has his effectual call whereby he gives the elect the salvation to which he ordained them, so he has his judgments toward the reprobates, whereby he executes his decree concerning them. As many, therefore, as he created to live miserably, and then perish everlastingly; these, that they may be brought to the end for which they were created, he sometimes deprives of the possibility of hearing the word, and at other times by the preaching thereof, blinds and stupifies them the more." (*Ibid.* c. 24, sec. 12.)

Friend. How is this? I say, if God has created them for never-ending death, why does he call them to turn and live?

Pred. "He calls to them that they may be more deaf; he kindles a light that they may be the more blind; he brings his doctrine to them, that they may be more ignorant, and applies the remedy to them, that they may not be healed." (*Ibid.* b. 3, c. 24, sec. 13.)

Friend. Enough, enough. Yet you do not make God the author of sin!

Pred. No certainly : " God cannot be termed the author of sin, though he is the cause of those actions which are sins." (*Petri Martyris Vermillii Com. in Roman.* p. 413.)

Friend. How is he the cause of them then ?

Pred. Two ways : First, by his eternal, unchangeable decree : Secondly, by his present irresistible power.

Friend. Did God then foreordain the sins of any man ?

Pred. " Both the reprobates and the elect were foreordained to sin, as sin, that the glory of God might be declared thereby." (*Zanchius de Nat. Dei.* p. 555.) " The reprobates," more especially, " who were predestinated to damnation and the causes of damnation, and created to that end, that they may live wickedly, and be vessels full of the dregs of sin." (*Piscator contra Tauffium*, p. 47.)

Friend. But surely the sins of the elect were not foreordained !

Pred. Yes, but they were : " For we neither can do more good than we do, nor less evil than we do ; because God from eternity has precisely decreed that both the good and the evil should be so done." (*Piscatoris Responsio ad Amicam Duplicationem Conradi Vorstii*, p. 176.)

Friend. I understand you as to God's decreeing sin. But how is his irresistible power now concerned in the sins of men ?

Pred. " God is the author of that action, which is sinful, by his irresistible will." (*Dr. Twisse*, pars 3, p. 21.)

Friend. How do you mean?

Pred. "God procures adultery, cursings, lyings." (*Piscat. Responsio ad Apologiam Bertii.*) "He supplies wicked men with opportunities of sinning, and inclines their hearts thereto. He blinds, deceives, and seduces them. He, by his working on their hearts, bends and stirs them up to do evil." (*Pet. Martyr. Ver. Comment. in Rom.* pp. 36, 413.) And thus "thieves, murderers, and other malefactors are God's instruments, which he uses to execute what he hath decreed in himself." (*Calv. Inst.* b. 1, c. 17, sec. 5.)

Friend. Do you not then charge God himself with sin?

Pred. No: "God necessitates them only to the act of sin, not to the deformity of sin." (*Twissi Vindiciæ*, pars 3, p. 22.) Beside, "when God makes angels or men sin, he does not sin himself, because he does not break any law. For God is under no law, and therefore cannot sin." (*Zuinglius in Serm. de Provid.* c. 5, 6.)

Friend. But how does God make angels or men to sin?

Pred. "The devil and wicked men are so held in on every side with the hand of God, that they cannot conceive, or contrive, or execute any mischief, any farther than God himself doth not permit only, but command. Nor are they only held in fetters, but compelled also, as with a bridle, to perform obedience to those commands." (*Calv. Inst.* b. 1, c. 17, sec. 11.)



Friend. This is true Turkish doctrine, and ought so to be exploded as that used to be in these words :—

“I do anathematize the blasphemy of Mohammed, which saith that God deceiveth whom he will, and whom he will he leadeth to that which is good. Himself doeth what he willeth, and is himself the cause of all good and all evil. Fate and destiny govern all things.” (*Nicetus Saracenita.*)

Pred. Nay, our doctrine is more ancient than Mohammed: it was maintained by St. Augustine.

Friend. Augustine speaks sometimes for it, and sometimes against it. But all antiquity for the four first centuries is against you, as is the whole eastern church to this day; and the church of England, both in her Catechism, Articles, and Homilies. And so are divers of our most holy martyrs, Bishop Hooper and Bishop Latimer in particular.

Pred. But does not antiquity say, Judas was predestinated to damnation?

Friend. Quite the contrary. St Chrysostom's express words are, “Judas, my beloved, was at first a child of the kingdom, and heard it said to him with the disciples, ‘Ye shall sit on twelve thrones;’ but afterward he became a child of hell.”

Pred. However, you will own that Esau was predestinated to destruction.

Friend. Indeed I will not. Some of your own writers believe he was finally saved, which

was the general opinion of the ancient fathers. And that scripture, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," plainly relates not to their persons but to their posterities.

But, supposing Esau or Judas to be damned, what is he damned for?

Pred. Without question, for unbelief. For as we are saved by faith alone, so unbelief is the only damning sin.

Friend. By what faith are you saved?

Pred. By faith in Christ, who gave himself for me.

Friend. But did he give himself for Esau and Judas? If not, you say they are damned for not believing a lie.

This consideration it was which forced Archbishop Usher to cry out, "What would not a man fly unto, rather than yield, that Christ did not die for the reprobates; and that none but the elect had any kind of title to him; and yet many thousands should be bound in conscience to believe that he died for them, and tied to accept him for their Redeemer and Saviour? Whereby they should have believed that which in itself is most untrue, and laid hold of that in which they had no kind of interest."

Pred. But what then do you mean by the words, election and reprobation?

Friend. I mean this: First, God did decree from the beginning to elect or choose, in Christ, all that should believe to salvation. And this decree proceeds from his own goodness, and is not built upon any goodness in the creature

Secondly : God did from the beginning decree to reprobate all who should obstinately and finally continue in unbelief.

Pred. What then do you think of absolute, unconditional election and reprobation ?

Friend. I think it cannot be found in Holy Writ, and that it is a plant which bears dismal fruit. An instance of which we have in Calvin himself ; who confesses that he procured the burning to death of Michael Servetus, purely for differing from him in opinion in matters of religion.

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### TRACT IX.

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## THOUGHTS

ON THE

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

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1. A TRACT has lately been published in my name, concerning the imputed righteousness of Christ. This calls me to explain myself upon that head ; which I will do with all the clearness I can. But I quarrel with no man for thinking or speaking otherwise than I do : I blame none for using those expressions which he believes to be Scriptural. If he quarrels with me for not using them, at least not so frequently as himself, I can only pity him, and

wish him more of "the mind which was in Christ."

2. "The righteousness of Christ" is an expression which I do not find in the Bible. "The righteousness of God" is an expression which I do find there. I believe this means, First, the mercy of God; as 2 Peter i, 1: "Them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God." How does it appear that "the righteousness of God" here, means either more or less than his mercy? "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation;" thy mercy in delivering me. "I will make mention of thy righteousness only. Thy righteousness, O God, is very high," Psalm lxxi, 15, &c. Here the "righteousness of God" is expressly mentioned; but I will not take upon me to say, that it means the righteousness or mercy of the Son, any more than of the Holy Ghost.

3. I believe this expression means, Secondly, God's method of justifying sinners. So Rom. i, 16: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for therein is the righteousness of God," his way of justifying sinners, "revealed." "Now the righteousness of God is manifested; even the righteousness of God which is by faith;" (unless righteousness here also means mercy;) "Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of the sins that are past; that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,"

iii, 21, &c. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness," (method of justifying sinners,) "and going about to establish their own righteousness," (a method of their own opposite to his,) "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," x, 3.

4. Perhaps it has a peculiar meaning in 2 Cor. v, 21: "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in" (or through) "him;" that we might be justified and sanctified, might receive the whole blessing of God through him.

5. And is not this the natural meaning of Phil. iii, 8, 9: "That I may win Christ, and be found in him," grafted into the true vine, "not having my own righteousness,"—the method of justification which I so long chose for myself, "which is of the law; but the righteousness which is of God"—the method of justification which God hath chosen—"by faith?"

6. "But is not Christ termed 'our righteousness'?" He is: "This is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness," Jer. xxiii, 6. And is not the plain, indisputable meaning of this scripture, He shall be what he is called, the sole purchaser, the sole meritorious cause, both of our justification and sanctification?

7. Nearly related to this is the following text, "Jesus Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i, 30. And what does this prove, but that he is made unto us righteous-

ness, or justification, just as he is made unto us sanctification? In what sense? He is the sole Author of one, as well as of the other, the Author of our whole salvation.

8. There seems to be something more implied in Romans x, 3. Does it not imply thus much? "Christ is the end of the law"—not only of the Mosaic dispensation, but of the law of works, which was given to Adam in his original perfection—"for righteousness to every one that believeth;" to the end that "every one who believeth" in him, though he have not kept, and cannot keep, that law, may be both accounted and made righteous.

9. Accordingly, frequent mention is made, in Scripture, of "faith counted for righteousness." So Gen. xv, 6: "He (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness:" A text repeated, with but little variation, over and over in the New Testament "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness," Rom. iv, 5. Thus it was that "Noah became heir of the righteousness," the justification "which is by faith," Heb. xi, 7. Thus also "the Gentiles," when the Jews fell short, "attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith," Rom. ix, 30. But that expression, "the righteousness of Christ," does not occur in any of these texts.

10. It seems, righteousness in the following texts means neither more nor less than justification. "If righteousness come by the law, then

Christ is dead in vain," Gal. ii, 21. "If there had been a law which could have given life," spiritual life, or a title to life eternal, "then righteousness should have been by the law;" iii, 21; though some may think it here includes sanctification also: which it appears to do, Rev. xix, 8: "The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints."

11. "But when St. Paul says, (Rom. v, 18,) 'by the righteousness of one,' (called in the following verse, 'the obedience of one,' even his 'obedience unto death,' his dying for us,) 'the free gift came,' does he not mean the righteousness of Christ?" Undoubtedly he does. But this is not the question. We are not inquiring what he means, but what he says. We are all agreed as to the meaning, but not as to the expression, "the imputing the righteousness of Christ;" which I still say, I dare not insist upon, neither require any one to use, because I cannot find it in the Bible. If any one can, he has better eyes than me; and I wish he would show me where it is.

12. Now, if by "the righteousness of Christ" we mean any thing which the Scripture does not mean, it is certain we put darkness for light. If we mean the same which the Scripture means by different expressions, why do we prefer this expression to the Scriptural? Is not this correcting the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and opposing our own to the perfect knowledge of God?

13. I am myself the more sparing in the use

of it, because it has been so frequently and so dreadfully abused ; and because the Antinomians use it at this day to justify the grossest abominations. And it is great pity that those who love, who preach, and follow after holiness, should, under the notion of honoring Christ, give any countenance to those who continually make him "the minister of sin," and so build on his righteousness as to live in such ungodliness and unrighteousness as is scarce named even among the heathens.

14. And doth not this way of speaking naturally tend to make Christ the minister of sin ? For if the very personal obedience of Christ (as those expressions directly lead me to think) be mine the moment I believe, can any thing be added thereto ? Does my obeying God add any value to the perfect obedience of Christ ? On this scheme, then, are not the holy and unholy on the very same footing ?

15. Upon the whole, I cannot express my thoughts better than in the words of that good man, Mr. Hervey : " If people may be safe and their inheritance secure without any knowledge of these particularities, why should you offer to puzzle their heads with a few unnecessary terms ? We are not very solicitous as to the credit or the use of any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled as repenting criminals at the Redeemer's feet ; let them rely as devoted pensioners on his precious merits ; and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blissful immortality." (*Dialogues*, vol. i, p. 43. Dublin edition.)



## TRACT X.

### SERIOUS THOUGHTS

UPON

#### THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

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1. MANY large volumes have been already published on this important subject. But the very length of them makes them hard to be understood, or even purchased, by common readers. A short, plain treatise on this head is what serious men have long desired, and what is here offered to those whom God has endowed with love and meekness of wisdom.

2. By *the saints*, I understand, those who are holy or righteous in the judgment of God himself; those who are endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience; those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual, invisible church; those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches;' those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world; those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit; those who live by faith in the Son of God; those who are

sanctified by the blood of the covenant; those to whom all or any of these characters belong, I mean by the term *saints*.

3. Can any of these fall away? By *falling away*, we mean not barely falling into sin. This, it is granted, they may. But can they fall totally? Can any of these so fall from God as to perish everlastingly?

4. I am sensible either side of this question is attended with great difficulties; such as reason alone could never remove. Therefore, "to the law and to the testimony." Let the living oracles decide: and if these speak for us, we neither seek nor want farther witness.

5. On this authority, I believe a saint may fall away; that one who is holy or righteous in the judgment of God himself may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

I. For thus saith the Lord: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die," Ezek. xviii, 24.

That this is to be understood of eternal death appears from the twenty-sixth verse: "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them;" (here is temporal death:) "for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die." (Here is death eternal.)

It appears farther from the whole scope of the chapter, which is to prove, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," verse 4.

If you say, "The soul here means the body," I answer, That will die whether you sin or no.

6. Again, thus saith the Lord: "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness," (yea, or to that promise as absolute and unconditional,) "and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for the iniquity that he hath committed shall he die," xxxiii, 13.

Again: "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby," verse 18.

Therefore, one who is holy and righteous in the judgment of God himself may yet so fall as to perish everlastingly.

7. "But how is this consistent with what God declared elsewhere: 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments,—I will visit their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. I have sworn once by my holiness, that I will not fail David,'" Psalm lxxxix, 30–35.

I answer, There is no manner of inconsistency between one declaration and the other. The prophet declares the just judgment of God against every righteous man who falls from his righteousness. The psalmist declares the old loving kindnesses which God swore unto David in his truth. "I have found," saith he, "David,

my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. My hand shall hold him fast, and my arm shall strengthen him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven," verses 20, 21, 29. It follows: "But if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;—nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my truth to fail. My covenant will I not break. I will not fail David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me," verse 30, &c.

May not every man see, that the covenant here spoken of relates wholly to David and his seed or children? Where then is the inconsistency between the most absolute promise made to a particular family, and that solemn account which God has here given of his way of dealing with all mankind?

Beside, the very covenant mentioned in these words is not absolute, but conditional. The condition of repentance in case of forsaking God's law was implied, though not expressed; and so strongly implied, that, this condition failing, not being performed, God did also fail David. He did "alter the thing that had gone out of his lips," and yet without any impeachment of his truth. He "abhorred and forsook his anointed," verse 38, the seed of David, whose throne, if they had repented, should have been "as the days of heaven." He did "break the covenant of his servant, and cast his crown to the ground," verse 39. So vainly are these

words of the psalmist brought to contradict the plain, full testimony of the prophet!

8. Nor is there any contradiction between this testimony of God by Ezekiel, and those words which he spake by Jeremiah: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." For do these words assert, that no righteous man ever turns from his righteousness? No such thing. They do not touch the question, but simply declare God's love to the Jewish church. To see this in the clearest light, you need only read over the whole sentence: "At the same time, saith the Lord, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I caused him to rest. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me," saith the prophet, speaking in the person of Israel, "saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel," xxxi, 1-4.

Suffer me here to observe, once for all, a fallacy which is constantly used by almost all writers on this point. They perpetually beg the question, by applying to particular persons assertions, or prophecies, which relate only to the church in general; and some of them only to the Jewish church and nation, as distinguished from all other people.

If you say, "But it was particularly revealed

to me, that God had loved me with an everlasting love;" I answer, Suppose it was, (which might bear a dispute,) it proves no more, at the most, than that you in particular shall persevere; but does not affect the general question, whether others shall, or shall not.

9. Secondly. One who is endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the inspired apostle, "War a good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck," 1 Tim. i, 18, 19.

Observe, 1. These men (such as Hymeneus and Alexander) had once the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, which they once had, or they could not have "put it away."

Observe, 2. They "made shipwreck" of the faith, which necessarily implies the total and final loss of it. For a vessel once wrecked can never be recovered. It is totally and finally lost.

And the apostle himself, in his second Epistle to Timothy, mentions one of these two as irrecoverably lost. "Alexander," says he, "did me much evil: the Lord shall reward him according to his works," 2 Tim. iv, 14. Therefore one who is endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

10. "But how can ~~this~~ be reconciled with the words of our Lord, 'He that believeth shall be saved?'"

Do you think these words mean, "he that believes" at this moment "shall" certainly and inevitably "be saved?"

If this interpretation be good, then, by all the rules of speech, the other part of the sentence must mean, "He" that does "not believe" at this moment, "shall" certainly and inevitably "be damned."

Therefore that interpretation cannot be good. The plain meaning then of the whole sentence is, "He that believeth," if he continue in faith, "shall be saved; he that believeth not," if he continue in unbelief, "shall be damned."

11. "But does not Christ say elsewhere, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life?' John iii, 36, and 'He that believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life?'" Verse 24.

I answer, 1. The love of God is everlasting life. It is, in substance, the life of heaven. Now, every one that believes, loves God, and therefore "hath everlasting life."

2. Every one that believes "is" therefore "passed from death," spiritual death, "unto life;" and,

3. "Shall not come into condemnation," if he endureth in the faith unto the end; according to our Lord's own words, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved;" and, "Verily I say

unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death," John viii, 51.

12. Thirdly. Those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual, invisible church, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the apostle : "Some of the branches are broken off, and thou art grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree. Be not high minded, but fear : if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold the goodness and severity of God ! On them which fell, severity ; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness ; otherwise thou shalt be cut off," Rom. xi, 17, 20-22.

We may observe here, 1. The persons spoken to were actually grafted into the olive tree.

2. This olive tree is not barely the outward visible church, but the invisible, consisting of holy believers. So the text : "If the first fruit be holy, the lump is holy ; and if the root be holy, so are the branches," verse 16. And, "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith."

3. These holy believers were still liable to be cut off from the invisible church into which they were then grafted.

4. Here is not the least intimation of those who were so cut off being ever grafted in again.

Therefore, those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual invisible church, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.



13. "But how does this agree with the 29th verse, 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.'"

The preceding verse shows: "As touching the election" (the unconditional election of the Jewish nation) "they are beloved for the fathers' sake;" for the sake of their forefathers. It follows: (in proof of this, that "they are beloved for the fathers' sake," that God has still blessing in store for the Jewish nation:) "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance;" for God doth not repent of any blessings he hath given them, or any privileges he hath called them to. The words here referred to were originally spoken with a peculiar regard to these national blessings. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent," Num. xxiii, 19.

14. "But do not you hereby make God changeable? Whereas 'with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' James i, 17." By no means. God is unchangeably holy: therefore, he always "loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity." He is unchangeably good: therefore, he pardoneth all that "repent and believe the Gospel." And he is unchangeably just: therefore, he "rewardeth every man according to his works." But all this hinders not his resisting, when they are proud, those to whom he gave grace when they were humble. Nay, his unchangeableness itself requires, that, if they grow high minded, God should cut them off; that there should be a proportionable change in all the Divine dispensations toward them.

15. "But how then is God faithful? I answer, In fulfilling every promise which he hath made, to all to whom it is made, all who fulfil the condition of that promise. More particularly, 1. "God is faithful" in that "he will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear," 1 Cor. x, 13. 2. "The Lord is faithful, to establish and keep you from evil;" (if you put your trust in him;) from all the evil which you might otherwise suffer, through "unreasonable and wicked men," 2 Thess. iii, 2, 3. 3. "Quench not the spirit; hold fast that which is good; abstain from all appearance of evil; and your whole spirit, soul, and body, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it," 1 Thess. v, 19, &c. 4. Be not disobedient unto the heavenly calling; and "God is faithful, by whom ye were called, to confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. i, 8, 9. Yet, notwithstanding all this, unless you fulfil the condition, you cannot attain the promise.

"Nay, but are not 'all the promises, yea and amen?'" They are firm as the pillars of heaven. Perform the condition, and the promise is sure. Believe, and thou shalt be saved.

"But many promises are absolute and unconditional." In many, the condition is not expressed. But this does not prove there is none implied. No promises can be expressed in a more absolute form, than those above cited

from the eighty-ninth psalm. And yet we have seen, a condition was implied even there, though none was expressed.

16. "But there is no condition, either expressed or implied, in those words of St. Paul: 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,' " Rom. viii, 38, 39.

Suppose there is not, (which will bear a dispute,) yet what will this prove? Just thus much, —that the apostle was at that time fully persuaded of his own perseverance. And I doubt not, but many believers at this day have the very same persuasion, termed in Scripture, "The full assurance of hope." But this does not prove that every believer shall persevere, any more than that every believer is thus fully persuaded of his perseverance.

IV. 17. Fourthly. Those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith our blessed Lord himself, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away. I am the vine, ye are the branches. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned," John xv, 1-6.

Here we may observe, 1. The persons spoken of were in Christ, branches of the true vine: 2.

Some of these branches abide not in Christ, but the Father taketh them away : 3. The branches which abide not are cast forth, cast out from Christ and his church : 4. They are not only cast forth, but withered ; consequently, never grafted in again : nay, 5. They are not only cast forth and withered, but also cast into the fire : and 6. They are burned. It is not possible for words more strongly to declare, that even those who are now branches in the true vine may yet so fall as to perish everlastingly.

18. By this clear, indisputable declaration of our Lord, we may interpret those which might be otherwise liable to dispute ; wherein it is certain, whatever he meant beside, he did not mean to contradict himself. For example : " This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing." Most sure ; all that God hath given him ; or, as it is expressed in the next verse, " every one which believeth on him," namely, to the end, he " will raise up at the last day," to reign with him for ever.

Again : " I am the living bread :—if any man eat of this bread," (by faith,) " he shall live for ever," John vi, 51. True ; if he continue to eat thereof. And who can doubt of it ?

Again : " My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John x, 27, 28.

In the preceding text the condition is only

implied; in this it is plainly expressed. They are my sheep that hear my voice, that follow me in all holiness. And "if ye do those things, ye shall never fall." None shall "pluck you out of my hands."

Again: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end," John xiii, 1. "Having loved his own," namely, the apostles, (as the very next words, "which were in the world," evidently show,) "he loved them unto the end" of his life, and manifested that love to the last.

19. Once more: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are one," John xvii, 11.

Great stress has been laid upon this text; and it has been hence inferred, that all those whom the Father had given him (a phrase frequently occurring in this chapter) must infallibly persevere to the end.

And yet in the very next verse, our Lord himself declares that one of those whom the Father had given him did not persevere unto the end, but perished everlastingly.

His own words are, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition," John xvii. 12.

So one even of these was finally lost!—a demonstration that the phrase, "those whom thou has given me," signifies here (if not in most other places too) the twelve apostles, and them only.

20. On this occasion, I cannot but observe another common instance of begging the question,—of taking for granted what ought to be proved. It is usually laid down as an indisputable truth, that whatever our Lord speaks to or of his apostles is to be applied to all believers. But this cannot be allowed by any who impartially search the Scriptures. They cannot allow, without clear and particular proof, that any one of those texts which related primarily to the apostles (as all men grant) belong to any but them.

V. 21. Fifthly. Those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world, may yet fall back into those pollutions, and perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the Apostle Peter, “If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” (the only possible way of escaping them,) “they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them,” 2 Pet. ii, 20, 21.

That the knowledge of the way of righteousness, which they had attained, was an inward, experimental knowledge, is evident from that other expression,—they had “escaped the pollutions of the world;” an expression parallel to

that in the preceding chapter, verse 4 : " Having escaped the corruption which is in the world." And in both chapters, this effect is ascribed to the same cause ; termed in the first, " the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue ;" in the second, more explicitly, " the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

And yet they lost that experimental knowledge of Christ and the way of righteousness ; they fell back into the same pollutions they had escaped, and were " again entangled therein and overcome. They " turned from the holy commandment delivered to them," so that their " latter end was worse than their beginning."

Therefore those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world, may yet fall back into those pollutions, and perish everlastingly.

22. And this is perfectly consistent with St. Peter's words, in the first chapter of his former epistle : " Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Undoubtedly, so are all they who ever attain eternal salvation. It is the power of God only, and not our own, by which we are kept one day or one hour.

VI. 23. Sixthly. Those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and the fruits of the Spirit, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the inspired writer to the He-

brews: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,—if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame," Heb. vi, 4, 6.

Must not every unprejudiced person see, the expressions 'here used are so strong and clear, that they cannot, without gross and palpable wresting, be understood of any but true believers?

They "were once enlightened;" an expression familiar with the apostle, and never by him applied to any but believers. So: "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power, to us-ward that believe," Eph. i, 17-19. So again: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv, 6. This is a light which no unbelievers have. They are utter strangers to such enlightening. "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them," verse 4.

"They had tasted of the heavenly gift," (emphatically so called,) and were made partakers



of the Holy Ghost." So St. Peter likewise couples them together: "Be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts ii, 38; whereby the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, with all the other fruits of the Spirit. Yea, it is remarkable, that our Lord himself in his grand commission to St. Paul (to which the apostle probably alludes in these words) comprises all these three particulars. "I send thee to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," (here contracted into that one expression, "they were enlightened,") that they may receive forgiveness of sins," ("the heavenly gift,") "and an inheritance among them which are sanctified," Acts xxvi, 18; which are made "partakers of the Holy Ghost," of all the sanctifying influences of the Spirit.

The expression, "They tasted of the heavenly gift," is taken from the psalmist, "Taste and see that the Lord is good," Psalm xxxiv, 8. As if he had said, Be ye as assured of his love, as of any thing you see with your eyes. And let the assurance thereof be sweet to your soul, as honey is to your tongue.

And yet those who had been thus "enlightened," had "tasted" this "gift," and been thus "partakers of the Holy Ghost," so "fell away" that it was "impossible to renew them again to repentance."

"But the apostle makes only a supposition, 'If they should fall away.'"

I answer : The apostle makes no supposition at all. There is no *if* in the original. The words are, *Αδυνατον της απαξ φωτισθεντας, και παραπεσοντας* ; that is, in plain English, "It is impossible to renew again unto repentance those who were once enlightened and have fallen away ;" therefore they must perish everlastingly.

24. "But if so, then farewell all my comfort."

Then your comfort depends on a poor foundation. My comfort stands not on any opinion, either that a believer can or cannot fall away, not on the remembrance of any thing wrought in me yesterday ; but on what is to-day ; on my present knowledge of God in Christ, reconciling me to himself ; on my now beholding the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ; walking in the light as he is in the light, and having fellowship with the Father and with the Son. My comfort is, that through grace I now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his Spirit doth bear witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. I take comfort in this and this only, that I see Jesus at the right hand of God ; that I personally for myself, and not for another, have a hope full of immortality ; that I feel the love of God shed abroad in my heart, being crucified to the world, and the world crucified to me. My rejoicing is this, the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have my conversation in the world.

Go and find, if you can, a more solid joy, a more blissful comfort, on this side heaven. But this comfort is not shaken, be that opinion true or false; whether the saints in general can or cannot fall.

If you take up with any comfort short of this, you lean on the staff of a broken reed, which not only will not bear your weight, but will enter into your hand and pierce you.

25. Seventhly. Those who live by faith, may yet fall from God, and perish everlastingly.

For thus saith the same inspired writer, "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x, 38. "The just," the justified person, "shall live by faith," even now shall he live the life which is hid with Christ in God; and if he endure unto the end, he shall live with God for ever. "But if any man draw back," saith the Lord, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him;" that is, I will utterly cast him off; and accordingly the drawing back here spoken of is termed, in the verse immediately following, "drawing back to perdition."

"But the person supposed to draw back, is not the same with him that is said to live by faith."

I answer, 1. Who is it then? Can any man draw back from faith who never came to it? But,

2. Had the text been fairly translated, there had been no pretence for this objection. For the original runs thus: "Ο δικαιος εκ πειρασ-

ζησεται· και εαν υποσειληται. If ο δικαιος, “the just man that lives by faith” (so the expression necessarily implies, there being no other nominative of the verb) “draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

“But the apostle adds: ‘We are not of them who draw back unto perdition.’” And what will you infer from thence? This is so far from contradicting what has been observed before, that it manifestly confirms it. It is a farther proof that there are those “who draw back unto perdition,” although the apostle was not of that number. Therefore those who live by faith may yet fall from God and perish everlastingly.

26. “But does not God say to every one that lives by faith, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?’”

The whole sentence runs thus: “Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” True; provided “your conversation be without covetousness,” and ye “be content with such things as ye have.” Then you may “boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Do you not see, 1. That this promise, as here recited, relates wholly to temporal things? 2. That, even thus taken, it is not absolute but conditional? And, 3. That the condition is expressly mentioned in the very same sentence?

27. Eighthly. Those who are sanctified by

the blood of the covenant, may so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

For thus again saith the apostle : “ If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin ; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing !” Heb. x, 26–29.

It is undeniably plain, 1. That the person mentioned here, was once sanctified by the blood of the covenant. 2. That he afterward, by known, wilful sin, trod under foot the Son of God. And, 3. That he hereby incurred a sorer punishment than death, namely, death everlasting.

Therefore, those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant may yet so fall as to perish everlastingly.

28. “ What ! Can the blood of Christ burn in hell ? or can the purchase of the blood of Christ go thither ?

I answer, 1. The blood of Christ cannot burn in hell, no more than it can be spilled on the earth. The heavens must contain both his flesh and blood until the restitution of all things. But,

2. If the oracles of God are true, one who

was purchased by the blood of Christ may go thither. For he that was sanctified by the blood of Christ was purchased by the blood of Christ. But one who was sanctified by the blood of Christ may nevertheless go to hell; may fall under that fiery indignation which shall for ever devour the adversaries.

29. "Can a child of God then go to hell; or can a man be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow? If God is our Father once, is he not our Father always?"

I answer, 1. A child of God, that is, a true believer, (for he that believeth is born of God,) while he continues a true believer, cannot go to hell. But, 2. If a believer make shipwreck of the faith, he is no longer a child of God. And then he may go to hell, yea, and certainly will, if he continues in unbelief. 3. If a believer may make shipwreck of the faith, then a man that believes now may be an unbeliever some time hence; yea, very possibly, to-morrow; but, if so, he who is a child of God to-day, may be a child of the devil to-morrow. For, 4. God is the Father of them that believe, so long as they believe. But the devil is the father of them that believe not, whether they did once believe or no.

30. The sum of all this is: If the Scriptures are true, those who are holy or righteous in the judgment of God himself; those who are endued with the faith that purifies the heart, that produces a good conscience; those who are grafted into the good olive tree, the spiritual,

invisible church ; those who are branches of the true vine, of whom Christ says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches ;" those who so effectually know Christ, as by that knowledge to have escaped the pollutions of the world ; those who see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of the witness and of the fruits of the Spirit ; those who live by faith in the Son of God ; those who are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, may nevertheless so fall from God as to perish everlastingly.

Therefore, let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

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## TRACT XI.

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### A PLAIN

### DEFINITION OF SAVING FAITH.

*How believing is the Gift of God, and whether it is in our power to believe.*

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WHAT is *faith* ? It is believing *heartily*. What is *saving* faith ? I dare not say, that it is "only believing confidently, my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake," for, if I live in sin, that belief is a *destructive* conceit, and not saving faith. Neither dare I say, that "saving

faith is only a sure trust and confidence, that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me;" \*for if I did, I should damn almost all mankind for four thousand years.

To avoid putting the black mark of damnation upon any man, that in any nation fears God and works righteousness, I would choose to say, that "saving faith is *believing* the saving truth *with the heart unto* internal, and (as we have opportunity) *unto* external *righteousness*, according to our light and dispensation." To St. Paul's words, Rom. x, 10, I add the epithets *internal* and *external*, in order to exclude, according to 1 John iii, 7, 8, the filthy imputation under which fallen believers may, if we credit the Antinomians, commit internal and external adultery, mental and bodily murder, without the least fear of endangering their interest in God's favor, and their inadmissible title to a throne of glory.

But "how is faith the gift of God?" Some persons think, that faith is as much out of our power, as the lightning that shoots from a distant cloud; they suppose that God drives sinners to the fountain of Christ's blood, as irre-

\* When the Church of England, and Mr. Wesley, give us particular definitions of faith, it is plain, that they consider it according to the *Christian* dispensation; the privileges of which must be principally insisted upon among Christians; and that our church and Mr. Wesley guards faith against Antinomianism, is evident from their maintaining, as well as St. Paul, that by bad works we lose a good conscience, and *make shipwreck of the faith*.



sistibly as the infernal *legion* drove the herd of swine into the sea of Galilee; and that a man is as passive in the first act of faith, as Jonah was in the act of the fish, which cast him upon the shore. Hence the plea of many, who lay fast hold on the horns of the devil's altar, unbelief, and cry out, "We can no more believe, than we can make a world."

But this is an *absurd* plea for several reasons :

1. It supposes, that when "God commands all men every where to repent, and to believe the Gospel," he commands them to do what is as impossible to them as the making of a new world.
2. It supposes that the terms of the covenant of *grace* are much harder than the terms of works. For the old covenant required only perfect human obedience: but the new covenant requires of *us* the work of an almighty God, i. e. *believing*; a work this, which, upon the scheme I oppose, is as impossible to *us* as the creation of the world.
3. It supposes, that the promises of salvation being suspended upon *believing*, a thing as impracticable to us as the making of a new world, we shall as infallibly be damned, if God does not believe in, or for us, as we should be, if we were to make a world on pain of damnation.
4. It supposes, that believing is a work which belongs to God alone: for no man in his senses can doubt but *creating a world*, or its tantamount, *believing*, is a work which none but God can manage.

5. It supposes, that when Christ *marvelled at the unbelief* of the Jews, he showed as little

wisdom as I should, were I to marvel at a man for not creating three worlds as quickly as a believer can say the three creeds. And, lastly, that when Christ fixes our damnation upon *unbelief*, [see Mark xvi, 16, and John iii, 18,] he acts far more tyrannically than the king would do, if he issued out a proclamation informing all his subjects, that whosoever shall not by such a time raise a new island within the British seas, shall be infallibly put to the most painful death.

Having thus exposed the erroneous sense, in which some people suppose that *faith is the gift of God*; I beg leave to mention in what sense it appears to me to be so. *Believing* is the gift of the *God of GRACE*, as *breathing*, moving, and *eating*, are the gifts of the *God of NATURE*. He gives me lungs and air, that I may breathe; he gives me life and muscles, that I may move; he bestows upon me food and a mouth, that I may eat; and when I have no stomach, he gives me common sense to see I must die or force myself to take some nourishment or some medicine: but he neither *breathes*, *moves*, nor *eats* for me; nay, when I think proper, I can accelerate my breathing, motion, and eating; and, if I please, I may even *fast*, *lie down*, or *hang myself*, and by that means put an end to my *eating*, *moving*, and *breathing*. Again, *Faith* is the gift of God to believers as *sight* is to you. The Parent of good freely gives you the light of the sun, and organs proper to receive it: he places you in a world, where that light visits you

daily : he apprizes you, that sight is conducive to your safety, pleasure, and profit : and every thing around you bids you use your eyes and see : nevertheless, you may not only drop your curtains, and extinguish your candle, but close your eyes also. This is exactly the case with regard to faith. Free grace removes (in part) the total blindness which Adam's fall brought upon us : free grace gently sends us some beams of truth, which is the light of the *Sun of righteousness* ; it disposes the eyes of our understanding to see those beams ; it excites us in various ways to welcome them ; it blesses us with many, perhaps with all the means of faith, such as opportunities to hear, read, inquire ; and power to consider, assent, consent, resolve, and re-resolve to believe the truth. But, after all, *believing* is as much our own act as *seeing* ; we may, in general, do, suspend, or omit the *act* of faith : especially when that act is not yet become *habitual*, and when the glaring light that *sometimes* accompanies the revelation of the truth is abated. Nay, we may imitate Pharaoh, Judas, and all reprobates : we may be so averse from " the light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world," we may so dread it, because our " works are evil," as to exemplify, like the Pharisees, such awful declarations as these : " Their eyes have they closed, lest they should see," &c.—" wherefore God gave them up to a reprobate mind, and they were blinded."

Two things have chiefly given room to our

mistakes, respecting the *strange impossibility* of believing; the *first* is our confounding the truths which characterize the several Gospel dispensations. We see, for example, that a poor, besotted drunkard, an overreaching, greedy tradesman, a rich, skeptical epicure, and a proud, ambitious courtier, have no more taste for the *Gospel of Christ*, than a horse and a mule have for the high-seasoned dishes that crown a royal table. An immense gulf is fixed between them and the *Christian* faith. In their present state they can no more believe *in Christ* than an unborn infant can become a man without passing through infancy and youth. But, although they cannot yet believe *in Christ*, may they not believe *in God*, according to the import of our Lord's words, "Ye believe *IN GOD*, believe also *IN ME*?" If the *Pharisees* COULD NOT believe *IN CHRIST*, it was not because God never gave them a power equal to that which created the world; but because they were practical Atheists, who actually rejected the *morning light* of the *Jewish* dispensation, and by that means absolutely unfitted themselves for the *meridian light* of the *Christian* dispensation.

The *second* cause of our mistake about the impossibility of *believing now*, is the confounding weak with strong faith. But had Abraham no faith in God's promise, till Isaac was born? Was Sarah a damnable unbeliever, till she felt the long expected fruit of her womb stir there? Had the woman of Canaan no faith till our

Lord granted her request, and cried out, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt?" Was the centurion an infidel, till Christ  *marvelled at his faith*, and declared "he had not found such faith, no, not in Israel?" And had the apostles no faith in *the promise of the Father*, till their heads were crowned with celestial fire? Can you, from Genesis to Revelation, find one single instance of a soul willing to believe, and absolutely unable to do it? From these two scriptures, "Lord, increase our faith;" "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief," can you justly infer, that the praying disciples, and the distressed father had no power to believe? Do not their words evidence just the contrary. That we cannot believe, any more than we can eat, without the help of God, is what we are all agreed upon: but does this in the least prove, that the help by which we believe, is as far out of the reach of willing souls, as the power to make a world?

Such scriptures as these, "Unto you it is given to believe." "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." "No man can come unto me except the Father draw him." "Every good gift," and, of course, that of faith, "coming from the Father of lights." Such scriptures, I say, secure indeed the honor of free grace, but do not destroy the power of free agency. To us that freely *believe* in a holy, righteous *God*, *it is given* freely to *believe* in a gracious bleeding Saviour; because *the sick* alone *have need of a physician*: and none but

those who believe in *God*, can see the need of *an ADVOCATE with him*: but ought we from thence to conclude that our unbelieving neighbors are necessarily debarred from believing in God? When our Lord said to the unbelieving Jews, that they **COULD NOT** *believe* in him, did he not speak of an impotency of their own making? I ask it again, if they obstinately resisted the light of their inferior dispensation, if they were none of Christ's *Jewish* sheep, how could they be his *Christian* sheep? If an obstinate boy sets himself against learning the letters, how can he ever learn to read? If a stubborn Jew stiffly opposes *the law of Moses*, how can he submit to *the law of Christ*? Is it not strange that some good people should leap into reprobation, rather than to admit so obvious a solution of this difficulty?

From the above mentioned texts we have then no more reason to infer, that God forces believers to 'believe, or that he believes for them, than to conclude that God constrains diligent tradesmen to get money, or gets it for them, because it is said, "We are not sufficient to **THINK ANY** thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God—who **GIVES US ALL** things richly to enjoy. Remember the Lord thy God, for it is **HE** that **GIVETH THEE** power to get wealth."


From the whole I conclude, that so long as the *accepted time*, and *the day of salvation*, continue, all sinners, who have not yet finally hardened themselves, may, day and night,

(through the help and power of the general light of Christ's *saving grace*, mentioned John i, 9, and Titus ii, 11,) receive *some* truth belonging to the *everlasting Gospel*; though it should be only this: "There is a God, who will call us to an account for our sins, and who spares us that we may break them off by repentance." And their cordial believing of this truth will make way for their receiving the higher truths, that stand between them and the top of the mysterious ladder of truth. I grant, it is impossible they should leap at once to the middle, much less to the highest round of that ladder; but if the foot of it is upon earth, in the very nature of things the lowest step is within their reach, and by laying hold of it, they may go on *from faith to faith*, till they stand firm even in the *Christian* faith; if distinguishing grace has elected them to have the *Christian Gospel*.

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#### EXTRACT.

WITH respect to works after justification, can any one retain his confidence in God without them? Has he any foundation in the Scriptures to do so? God absolutely requires that we should *do* as well as *be*. Not indeed, in a meritorious sense, but as the fruits of the law of love written in our hearts, acceptable to God and well pleasing, through Jesus Christ; and with every injunction he gives power to perform it. The *power* is given of *grace* and the *use* of that



power is the *act* of man. When the Lord, by his Spirit, reveals our inbred sin, and points us to the all-cleansing blood, and to the promises, to circumcise our hearts, that we may love him with all our heart, it is *his work* wrought in us freely. But, when this light is given, we are to embrace the promises, and *act faith* upon them. God hath said, *I will do it*. Let me ask, Do you believe he will do it *in you*? Hold fast that faith, then, for the promise is sure, it cannot fail : and God's time is *now*. Only believe, God at this moment requires an act of faith in you. He holds out the *promise* and bids you *believe*. But you will say, I do not feel the blessing. Poor Thomas ! Because thou hast not *seen*, thou *wilt* not believe. *Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

But you ask, *What must I believe* ? I answer, that God is faithful—that he *can* and *will*, in a moment, give you what you do not feel. Nay, you will not feel it till you have believed. If I had given you an apple, it would not be faith to believe I had given it ; but if I had *promised* to give you one, and to give it you instantly on your requesting ; if you then believed my promise, and took me at my word, though you did not see or handle the apple, this would be your act of faith *in me*. But how much more the immutable promise of God ! You cannot believe him in vain.

There is a manifest difference between believing in order *to be* saved, and the believing we *are* saved. You cannot believe that you



*are saved* until God gives you the *witness of his Spirit* that the thing is *now done*. Were you to believe yourself saved, *before* this salvation is given, you would believe an *untruth*, which certainly cannot bring you into salvation. All you have to do, as a penitent sinner, is to believe that God is *now* able and willing to save you, and hold fast this faith until you feel salvation to flow into your soul, with the witness and the fruits of the Spirit. But do not presume to believe that you have salvation until God gives you the witness of it in your hearts; and then you cannot doubt, because of the Spirit which he hath given, *that you might freely know the things which are given you of God*

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## TRACT XII.

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### A TREATISE ON BAPTISM.

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CONCERNING baptism I shall inquire, what it is; what benefits we receive by it; whether our Saviour designed it to remain always in his church; and who are the proper subjects of it.

I. 1. What it is. It is the initiatory sacrament which enters us into covenant with God. It was instituted by Christ, who alone has power to institute a proper sacrament, a sign, seal,

pledge, and means of grace, perpetually obligatory on all Christians. We know not, indeed, the exact time of its institution ; but we know it was long before our Lord's ascension. And it was instituted in the room of circumcision. For, as that was a sign and seal of God's covenant, so is this.

2. The matter of this sacrament is water ; which, as it has a natural power of cleansing, is the more fit for this symbolical use. Baptism is performed by washing, dipping, or sprinkling the person, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who is hereby devoted to the ever-blessed Trinity. I say, *by washing, dipping, or sprinkling* ; because it is not determined in Scripture in which of these ways it shall be done, neither by any express precept, nor by any such example as clearly proves it ; nor by the force or meaning of the word *baptize*.

3. That there is no express precept all calm men allow. Neither is there any conclusive example. John's baptism in some things agreed with Christ's, in others differed from it. But it cannot be certainly proved from Scripture, that even John's was performed by dipping. It is true, he baptized in Enon, near Salim, where there was much water. But this might refer to breadth rather than depth ; since a narrow place would not have been sufficient for so great a multitude. Nor can it be proved, that the baptism of our Saviour, or that administered by his disciples, was by immersion. No, nor that of the eunuch baptized by Philip ; though " they

both went down to the water;" for that going down may relate to the chariot, and implies no determinate depth of water. It might be up to their knees; it might not be above their ankles.

4. And as nothing can be determined from Scripture precept or example, so neither from the force or meaning of the word. For the words *baptize* and *baptism* do not necessarily imply *dipping*, but are used in other senses in several places. Thus we read that the Jews "were all baptized in the cloud and in the sea;" 1 Cor. x, 2; but they were not plunged in either. They could therefore be only sprinkled by drops of the sea water, and refreshing dews from the cloud; probably intimated in that, "Thou sentest a gracious rain upon thine inheritance, and refreshedst it when it was weary," Psalm lxviii, 9. Again: Christ said to his two disciples, "Ye shall be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with," Mark x, 38; but neither he nor they were dipped, but only sprinkled or washed with their own blood. Again we read, Mark vii, 4, of the baptisms (so it is in the original) of pots and cups, and tables or beds. Now pots and cups are not necessarily dipped when they are washed. Nay, the Pharisees washed the outsides of them only. And as for tables or beds, none will suppose they could be dipped. Here, then, the word *baptism*, in its natural sense, is not taken for dipping, but for washing or cleansing. And, that this is the true meaning of the word *baptize*, is testified by the greatest scholars and most proper judges in this matter

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It is true, we read of being "buried with Christ in baptism." But nothing can be inferred from such a figurative expression. Nay, if it held exactly, it would make as much for sprinkling as for plunging; since, in burying, the body is not plunged through the substance of the earth, but rather earth is poured or sprinkled upon it.

5. And as there is no clear proof of dipping in Scripture, so there is very probable proof of the contrary. It is highly probable, the apostles themselves baptized great numbers, not by dipping, but by washing, sprinkling, or pouring water. This clearly represented the cleansing from sin, which is figured by baptism. And the quantity of water used was not material; no more than the quantity of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. The jailer "and all his house were baptized" in the prison; Cornelius with his friends, (and so several households) at home. Now, is it likely, that all these had ponds or rivers, in or near their houses, sufficient to plunge them all? Every unprejudiced person must allow, the contrary is far more probable. Again: Three thousand at one time, and five thousand at another, were converted and baptized by St. Peter at Jerusalem; where they had none but the gentle waters of Siloam, according to the observation of Mr. Fuller: "There were no water mills in Jerusalem, because there was no stream large enough to drive them." The place, therefore, as well as the number, makes it highly probable that all these were baptized by sprinkling or pouring, and not

by immersion. To sum up all, the manner of baptizing (whether by dipping or sprinkling) is not determined in Scripture. There is no command for one rather than the other. There is no example from which we can conclude for dipping rather than sprinkling. There are probable examples of both; and both are equally contained in the natural meaning of the word.

II. 1. What are the benefits we receive by baptism, is the next point to be considered. And the first of these is, the washing away the guilt of original sin, by the application of the merits of Christ's death. That we are all born under the guilt of Adam's sin, and that all sin deserves eternal misery, was the unanimous sense of the ancient Church, as it is expressed in the Ninth Article of our own. And the Scripture plainly asserts, that we were "shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us;" that "we were all by nature children of wrath, and dead in trespasses and sins;" that "in Adam all die;" that "by one man's disobedience all were made sinners;" that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; which came upon all men, because all had sinned." This plainly includes infants; for they too die; therefore they have sinned: but not by actual sin; therefore by original; else what need have they of the death of Christ? Yea, "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned" actually "according to the similitude of Adam's transgression." This, which can relate to infants only, is a clear proof

that the whole race of mankind are obnoxious both to the guilt and punishment of Adam's transgression. But "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." And the virtue of this free gift, the merits of Christ's life and death are applied to us in baptism. "He gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word;" Eph. v, 25, 26; namely, in baptism, the ordinary instrument of our justification. Agreeably to this, our church prays in the baptismal office, that the person to be baptized may be "washed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and, being delivered from God's wrath, receive remission of sins, and enjoy the everlasting benediction of his heavenly washing;" and declares in the rubric at the end of the office, "It is certain, by God's word, that children who are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are saved." And this is agreeable to the unanimous judgment of all the ancient fathers.

2. By baptism we enter into covenant with God; into that everlasting covenant, which he hath commanded for ever; Psalm cxi, 9; that new covenant, which he promised to make with the spiritual Israel; even to "give them a new heart and a new spirit, to sprinkle clean water upon them," (of which the baptismal is only a figure,) "and to remember their sins and iniquities no more;" in a word, to be their God, as he promised to Abraham, in the evangelical cove-

nant which he made with him and all his spiritual offspring, Gen. xxii, 7, 8. And as circumcision was then the way of entering into this covenant, so baptism is now ; which is therefore styled by the apostle, (so many good interpreters render his words,) “the stipulation, contract, or covenant of a good conscience with God.”

3. By baptism we are admitted into the church, and consequently made members of Christ, its head. The Jews were admitted into the church by circumcision, so are the Christians by baptism. For “as many as are baptized into Christ,” in his name, “have” thereby “put on Christ :” Gal. iii, 27 ; that is, are mystically united to Christ, and made one with him. For, “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,” 1 Cor. xii, 13, namely, the church, “the body of Christ,” Eph. iv, 12. From which spiritual, vital union with him, proceeds the influence of his grace on those that are baptized ; as from our union with the church, a share in all its privileges, and in all the promises Christ has made to it.

4. By baptism, we who were “by nature children of wrath,” are made the children of God. And this regeneration which our church in so many places ascribes to baptism is more than barely being admitted into the church, though commonly connected therewith ; being “grafted into the body of Christ’s church, we are made the children of God by adoption and grace.” This is grounded on the plain words of our Lord, “Except a man be born again of

water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii, 5. By water then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the apostle, "the washing of regeneration." Our church therefore ascribes no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done. Nor does she ascribe it to the outward washing, but to the inward grace, which, added thereto, makes it a sacrament. Herein a principle of grace is infused, which will not be wholly taken away, unless we quench the Holy Spirit of God by long continued wickedness.

5. In consequence of our being made children of God, we are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. "If children," (as the apostle observes,) "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Herein we receive a title to, and an earnest of, "a kingdom which cannot be moved." Baptism doth now save us, if we live answerable thereto; if we repent, believe, and obey the Gospel: supposing this, as it admits us into the church here, so into glory hereafter.\*

[\* That Mr. Wesley, as a clergyman of the church of England, was originally a *high-churchman*, in the fullest sense, is well known. When he wrote this treatise, in the year 1756, he seems still to have used some expressions, in relation to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which we at this day should not prefer. Some such, in the judgment of the reader, may perhaps be found under this second head. This last sentence, however, contains a guarded corrective. It explains also the sense in which we believe Mr. W. intended much of what goes before to be understood.]



III. 1. But did our Saviour design this should remain always in his church? This is the third thing we are to consider. And this may be despatched in a few words, since there can be no reasonable doubt, but it was intended to last as long as the church into which it is the appointed means of entering. In the ordinary way, there is no other means of entering into the church or into heaven.

2. In all ages, the outward baptism is a means of the inward; as outward circumcision was of the circumcision of the heart. Nor would it have availed a Jew to say, "I have the inward circumcision, and therefore do not need the outward too:" that soul was to be cut off from his people. He had despised, he had broken God's everlasting covenant, by despising the seal of it, Gen. xvii, 14. Now, the seal of circumcision was to last among the Jews as long as the law lasted, to which it obliged them. By plain parity of reason, baptism, which came in its room, must last among Christians as long as the Gospel covenant into which it admits, and whereunto it obliges all nations.

3. This appears also from the original commission which our Lord gave to his apostles: "Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them. And lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Now, as long as this commission lasted, as long as Christ promised to be with them in the execution of it, so long doubtless were they to exe-

cute it, and to baptize as well as to teach. But Christ hath promised to be with them, that is, by his Spirit, in their successors to the end of the world. So long, therefore, without dispute, it was his design that baptism should remain in his church.

VI. 1. But the grand question is, Who are the proper subjects of baptism? grown persons only, or infants also? In order to answer this fully, I shall, First, lay down the grounds of infant baptism, taken from Scripture, reason, and primitive, universal practice; and Secondly, answer the objections against it.

2. As to the grounds of it: If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism; seeing, in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, unless this be washed away by baptism. It has been already proved, that this original stain cleaves to every child of man; and that hereby they are children of wrath, and liable to eternal damnation. It is true, the Second Adam has found a remedy for the disease which came upon all by the offence of the first. But the benefit of this is to be received through the means which he hath appointed; through baptism in particular, which is the ordinary means he hath appointed for that purpose; and to which God hath tied us, though he may not have tied himself. Indeed, where it cannot be had, the case is different; but extraordinary cases do not make void a standing rule. This therefore is our first ground. Infants need to be washed from original

sin ; therefore they are proper subjects of baptism.

3. Secondly. If infants are capable of making a covenant, and were and still are under the evangelical covenant, then they have a right to baptism, which is the entering seal thereof. But infants are capable of making a covenant, and were and still are under the evangelical covenant.

The custom of nations and common reason of mankind prove that infants may enter into a covenant, and may be obliged by compacts made by others in their name, and receive advantage by them. But we have stronger proof than this, even God's own word : " Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord,—your captains, with all the men of Israel ; your little ones, your wives, and the stranger,—that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God," Deut. xxix, 10–12. Now, God would never have made a covenant with little ones, if they had not been capable of it. It is not said children only, but little children, the Hebrew word properly signifying infants. And these may be still, as they were of old, obliged to perform, in aftertime, what they are not capable of performing at the time of their entering into that obligation.

4. The infants of believers, the true children of faithful Abraham, always were under the Gospel covenant. They were included in it, they had a right to it and to the seal of it ; as an infant heir has a right to his estate, though he

cannot yet have actual possession. The covenant with Abraham was a Gospel covenant; the condition the same, namely, faith, which the apostle observes was "imputed unto him for righteousness." The inseparable fruit of this faith was obedience; for by faith he left his country, and offered his son. The benefits were the same; for God promised, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee:" and he can promise no more to any creature; for this includes all blessings, temporal and eternal. The mediator is the same; for it was in his Seed, that is, in Christ, (Gen. xxii, 18; Gal. iii, 16,) that all nations were to be blessed; on which very account, the apostle says, "The Gospel was preached unto Abraham," Gal. iii, 8. Now the same promise that was made to him, the same covenant that was made with him, was made "with his children after him," Gen. xvii, 7; Gal. iii, 7. And upon that account it is called "an everlasting covenant." In this covenant children were also obliged to what they knew not, to the same faith and obedience with Abraham. And so they are still; as they are still equally entitled to all the benefits and promises of it.

5. Circumcision was then the seal of the covenant; which is itself therefore figuratively termed *the covenant*: Acts vii, 7. Hereby the children of those who professed the true religion were then admitted into it, and obliged to the conditions of it; and when the law was added, to the observance of that also. And when the old

seal of circumcision was taken off, this of baptism was added in its room ; our Lord appointing one positive institution to succeed another. A new seal was set to Abraham's covenant ; the seals differed, but the deed was the same ; only that part was struck off which was political or ceremonial. That baptism came in the room of circumcision, appears as well from the clear reason of the thing, as from the apostle's argument, where, after circumcision, he mentions baptism, as that wherein God had " forgiven us our trespasses ;" to which he adds, the " blotting out the handwriting of ordinances," plainly relating to circumcision and other Jewish rites ; which as fairly implies, that baptism came in the room of circumcision, as our Saviour's styling the other sacrament *the passover*, (Col. ii, 11-13 ; Luke xxii, 15) shows that it was instituted in the place of it. Nor is it any proof that baptism did not succeed circumcision, because it differs in some circumstances, any more than it proves the Lord's Supper did not succeed the passover, because in several circumstances it differs from it. This then is a second ground. Infants are capable of entering into covenant with God. As they always were, so they still are, under the evangelical covenant. Therefore they have a right to baptism, which is now the entering seal thereof.

6. Thirdly. If infants ought to come to Christ, if they are capable of admission into the church of God, and consequently of solemn sacramental dedication to him, then they are

proper subjects of baptism. But infants are capable of coming to Christ, of admission into the church, and solemn dedication to God.

That infants ought to come to Christ, appears from his own words : “ They brought little children to Christ, and the disciples rebuked them. And Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. xix, 13, 14. St. Luke expresses it still more strongly : “ They brought unto him even infants, that he might touch them,” xviii, 15. These children were so little that they were *brought* to him ; yet he says, “ Suffer them to *come* unto me ;” so little, that he “ took them up in his arms ;” yet he rebukes those who would have hindered their coming to him. And his command respected the future as well as the present. Therefore his disciples or ministers are still to suffer infants to come, that is, to be brought, unto Christ. But they cannot now come to him, unless by being brought into the Church ; which cannot be but by baptism. Yea, and “ of such,” says our Lord, “ is the kingdom of heaven ;” not of such only as were like these infants. For if they themselves were not fit to be subjects of that kingdom, how could others be so, because they were like them ? Infants, therefore, are capable of being admitted into the Church, and have a right thereto. Even under the Old Testament they were admitted into it by circumcision. And can we suppose they are in a worse condition under the Gospel, than they

were under the law ? and that our Lord would take away any privileges which they then enjoyed ? Would he not rather make additions to them ? This, then, is a third ground. Infants ought to come to Christ, and no man ought to forbid them. They are capable of admission into the church of God. Therefore, they are proper subjects of baptism.

7. Fourthly. If the apostles baptized infants, then are they proper subjects of baptism. But the apostles baptized infants, as is plain from the following consideration : the Jews constantly baptized as well as circumcised all infant proselytes. Our Lord, therefore, commanding his apostles to proselyte or disciple all nations by baptizing them, and not forbidding them to receive infants as well as others, they must needs baptize children also.

That the Jews admitted proselytes by baptism as well as by circumcision, even whole families together, parents and children, we have the unanimous testimony of their most ancient, learned, and authentic writers. The males they received by baptism and circumcision ; the women by baptism only. Consequently, the apostles, unless our Lord had expressly forbidden it, would of course do the same thing.

Indeed, the consequence would hold from circumcision only. For if it was the custom of the Jews, when they gathered proselytes out of all nations, to admit children into the church by circumcision, though they could not actually believe the law or obey it ; then the apostles,

making proselytes to Christianity by baptism, could never think of excluding children, whom the Jews always admitted, (the reason for their admission being the same,) unless our Lord had expressly forbidden it. It follows, the apostles baptized infants. Therefore, they are proper subjects of baptism.

8. If it be objected, "There is no express mention in Scripture of any infants whom the apostles baptized," I would ask, Suppose no mention had been made in the Acts of those two women baptized by the apostles, yet might we not fairly conclude, that when so many thousands, so many entire households were baptized, women were not excluded? especially since it was the known custom of the Jews to baptize them? The same holds of children; nay, more strongly, on the account of circumcision. Three thousand were baptized by the apostles in one day, and five thousand in another. And can it be reasonably supposed that there were no children among such vast numbers? Again: The apostles baptized many families; nay, we hardly read of one master of a family, who was converted and baptized, but his whole family (as was before the custom among the Jews) were baptized with him: thus the "jailer's household, he and all his; the household of Caius, of Stephanus, of Crispus." And can we suppose that in all these households, which, we read, were, without exception, baptized, there should not be so much as one child or infant? But, to go one step farther, St. Peter says to



the multitude, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins. For the promise is to you, and to your children," Acts ii, 38, 39. Indeed, the answer is made directly to those who asked, "What shall we do?" But it reaches farther than to those who asked the question. And though children could not actually repent, yet they might be baptized. And that they are included, appears, 1. Because the apostle addresses to "every one" of them, and in "every one" children must be contained. 2. They are expressly mentioned: "The promise is to you, and to your children."

9. Lastly. If to baptize infants has been the general practice of the Christian church in all places and in all ages, then this must have been the practice of the apostles, and, consequently, the mind of Christ. But to baptize infants has been the general practice of the Christian church, in all places and in all ages. Of this we have unexceptionable witnesses: St. Austin for the Latin church, who flourished before the year 400; and Origen for the Greek, born in the second century; both declaring, not only that the whole church of Christ did then baptize infants, but likewise that they received this practice from the apostles themselves. (*August. de Genesi*, l. 10, c. 23; *Orig. in Rom.* vi.) St. Cyprian likewise is express for it, and a whole council with him. (*Epist. ad Fidum.*) If need were, we might cite likewise Athanasius, Chrysostom, and a cloud of witnesses. Nor is there one instance to be found in all antiquity, of any

orthodox Christian who denied baptism to children when brought to be baptized ; nor any one of the fathers, or ancient writers, for the first eight hundred years at least, who held it unlawful. And that it has been the practice of all regular churches ever since, is clear and manifest. Not only our own ancestors, when first converted to Christianity, not only all the European churches, but the African too and the Asiatic, even those of St. Thomas in the Indies, do, and ever did, baptize their children. The fact being thus cleared, that infant baptism has been the general practice of the Christian church in all places and in all ages, that it has continued without interruption in the church of God for above seventeen hundred years, we may safely conclude, it was handed down from the apostles, who best knew the mind of Christ.

10. To sum up the evidence ; If outward baptism be generally, in an ordinary way, necessary to salvation, and infants may be saved as well as adults, nor ought we to neglect any means of saving them : if our Lord commands such to come, to be brought unto him, and declares, " Of such is the kingdom of heaven ;" if infants are capable of making a covenant, or having a covenant made for them by others, being included in Abraham's covenant, (which was a covenant of faith, an evangelical covenant,) and never excluded by Christ ; if they have a right to be members of the church, and were accordingly members of the Jewish ; if, suppose our Lord had designed to exclude them

from baptism, he must have expressly forbidden his apostles to baptize them, (which none dares to affirm he did,) since otherwise they would do it of course, according to the universal practice of their nation ; if it is highly probable they did so, even from the letter of Scripture, because they frequently baptized whole households, and it would be strange if there were no children among them ; if the whole church of Christ, for seventeen hundred years together, baptized infants, and were never opposed till the last century but one, by some not very holy men in Germany ; lastly, if there are such inestimable benefits conferred in baptism, the washing away the guilt of original sin, the engrafting us into Christ, by making us members of his church, and thereby giving us a right to all the blessings of the Gospel ; it follows, that infants may, yea, ought to be baptized, and that none ought to hinder them.

I am, in the last place, to answer those objections which are commonly brought against infant baptism :—

1. The chief of these is : “ Our Lord said to his apostles, ‘ Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,’ Matt. xxviii, 19. Here Christ himself put teaching before baptizing. Therefore, infants, being incapable of being taught, are incapable of being baptized.”

I answer, 1. The order of words in Scripture is no certain rule for the order of things. We read in St. Mark, i, 4. “ John baptized in the

wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance ;” and, verse 5, “ They were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.” Now, either the order of words in Scripture does not always imply the same order of things ; or it follows, that John baptized before his hearers either confessed or repented. But, 2. The words are manifestly mistranslated. For if we read, “ Go and teach all nations baptizing them —teaching them to observe all things,” it makes plain tautology, vain and senseless repetition. It ought to be translated, (which is the literal meaning of the words,) “Go and make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them.” That infants are capable of being made proselytes or disciples has been already proved ; therefore, this text, rightly translated, is no valid objection against infant baptism.

2. Their next objection is : “ The Scripture says, ‘ Repent and be baptized ; believe and be baptized.’” Therefore, repentance and faith ought to go before baptism. But infants are incapable of these ; therefore they are incapable of baptism.”

I answer : Repentance and faith were to go before circumcision, as well as before baptism. Therefore, if this argument held, it would prove just as well, that infants were incapable of circumcision. But we know God himself determined the contrary, commanding them to be circumcised at eight days old. Now, if infants were capable of being circumcised, notwithstanding that repentance and faith were to go

before circumcision in grown persons, they are just as capable of being baptized ; notwithstanding that repentance and faith are, in grown persons, to go before baptism. This objection, therefore, is of no force ; for it is as strong against circumcision of infants as infant baptism.

3. It is objected, Thirdly, "There is no command for it in Scripture. Now, God was angry with his own people, because they did that which, he said, 'I commanded them not,' Jer. vii, 31. One plain text would end all the dispute."

I answer, 1. We have reason to fear it would not. It is as positively commanded in a very plain text of Scripture, that we should "teach and admonish one another with psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord with grace in our hearts," Eph. v, 19, as it is to honor our father and mother : but does this put an end to all dispute ? Do not these very persons absolutely refuse to do it, notwithstanding a plain text, an express command ?

I answer, 2. They themselves practise what there is neither express command nor clear example for in Scripture. They have no express command for baptizing women. They say, indeed, "Women are implied in 'all nations.' " They are ; and so are infants too ; but the command is not express for either. And for admitting women to the Lord's Supper, they have neither express command, nor clear example. Yet they do it continually, without either one or the other. And they are justified therein by the

plain reason of the thing. This also justifies us in baptizing infants, though without express command or clear example.

If it be said, "But there is a command, 'Let a man,' *ανθρωπος*, 'examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread,' 1 Cor. xi, 28; the word 'man,' in the original, signifying indifferently either men or women:" I grant it does in other places; but here the word "himself," immediately following, confines it to men only. "But women are implied in it, though not expressed." Certainly; and so are infants in "all nations."

"But we have Scripture example for it: for it is said in the Acts, 'The apostles continued in prayer and supplication with the women.'" True, in prayer and supplication; but it is not said, "in communicating:" nor have we one clear example of it in the Bible.

Since, then, they admit women to the communion, without any express command or example, but only by consequence from Scripture, they can never show reason why infants should not be admitted to baptism, when there are so many scriptures which by fair consequence show they have a right to it, and are capable of it.

As for the texts wherein God reproves his people for doing "what he commanded them not;" that phrase evidently means, what he had forbidden; particularly in that passage of Jeremiah. The whole verse is, "They have built the high places of Tophet, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not." Now, God had expressly

forbidding them to do this ; and that on pain of death. But surely there is a difference between the Jews offering their sons and daughters to idols, and Christians offering theirs to God. On the whole, therefore, it is not only lawful and innocent, but meet, right, and our bounden duty, in conformity to the uninterrupted practice of the whole church of Christ from the earliest ages, to consecrate our children to God by baptism, as the Jewish church were commanded to do by circumcision.

NOVEMBER 11, 1756.

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## THOUGHTS ON INFANT BAPTISM.

EXTRACTED FROM A LATE WRITER, BY MR. WESLEY.

THE baptism of infants has been a troublesome dispute almost ever since the reformation : but I shall only rehearse a few arguments commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptizing children.

I. The covenant made with Abraham and his seed, Genesis xvii, is the covenant of grace ; it includes, and was designed to extend to all believers. When God promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed, St. Paul assures us, that by Abraham's seed is meant all that should imitate the faith of Abraham, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, Gal. iii, 7, " Know ye, therefore, that they who are of faith, the same are the

children of Abraham;" verse 29, "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The same spiritual promises and blessings, which belonged to the church under the *Old Testament*, belong also to it under the *New*, Acts ii, 39; 2 Cor. i, 20. Abraham is represented as the root, or stock of the visible church, Rom. xi, 16, 17, &c. The Jewish church are the natural branches of it: The Gentiles are ingrafted into the same stock, ver. 17, 24, and partake of the blessings of it.

From these texts, (and many others might easily be produced,) it seems evident, that the Jewish and the Christian church are but one and the same visible church in a continued succession, though under different administrations and ordinances.

II. The covenant made with Abraham, and with his seed, is still in force. This is implied in what has been already said: but it ought to be particularly considered. It is plainly asserted by the apostle, Gal. iii, 17. To the same purpose the apostle speaks in Romans iv, 14, 16. Here he declares that the promise made to Abraham, is not made of none effect, or abolished, but is sure to all believers in all ages.

Ever since God called the family of Abraham, and settled his visible church in it, he never suffered it to fail. It was an everlasting covenant that he made with Abraham, to be his God, and the God of his seed, Gen. xvii, 7, that he might be the father both of Jews and Gentiles,



who were brought unto the church, as in Rom. iv, 11, 16.

III. The *children* of the Jews were visible members of the Jewish church under the covenant of Abraham, and as such they were acknowledged and received into it by circumcision, as the door of entrance, Gen. xvii, 9-14.

IV. The *children* of Christians were never cut off from this privilege, when their fathers were received into the church, whether they were Jews or Gentiles; and therefore they are members of the Christian church also, under spiritual promises and blessings. When the Jews, the *natural branches*, were cut off from the good olive tree, their *little buds* were cut off with them also; and when the Gentiles by a profession of faith were *grafted* in as *foreign branches*, their *little buds* were grafted in with them. Christ received the *children* that were brought by their parents, and "laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven," Mark x, 13-16. The promises of the Old Testament, wherein children are included in some of the prophets, do refer to the Gentile church as well as the Jewish, Isa. xlv, 3, 5; Isa. lxv, 23; Joel ii, 28, 29. For it is "the blessing of Abraham" which reaches to his seed, "that comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ," Gal. iii, 14. Rom. xv, 8, 9, "that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy."

V. *Baptism* is now (like circumcision of old) the *sign* of God's covenant. This is plainly

intimated by the apostle in Gal. iii, 27, 29. Circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism has come in the room of circumcision, seems plain from Col. ii, 12, where the apostle argues, that being baptized, we need not be circumcised : and beside, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, i. e. the removal of sin ; one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

VI. As this seems to manifest the right of the children of Christians to these blessings, or that they have an interest in this covenant, so there are some considerations, which render it very probable that children should be admitted into the visible church, by the Christian door of entrance, that is, baptism. As, for instance,

First, the Gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but *increase* the privileges of the church : it takes away yokes and burdens indeed, such as circumcision was, Acts xv, 10, but does not *diminish* its honors or privileges.

Again, when the father or mother of a family believed in Christ, their households were baptized, together with themselves, even where there is no mention that the household believed in Christ also : as in the case of Lydia and Stephanus, Acts xvi, 15 ; 1 Cor. i, 16. Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

Yet farther, children under the *New Testa-*

*ment* are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the *Old*. It is granted, that they neither could *then*, nor can *now* understand the blessings nor the duties: yet they might receive the seal of circumcision, or of baptism, as a bond laid upon them in their infancy, to fulfil the obligations and the duties of riper years, and as an encouragement to wait, and hope for the blessings. This was the case of Jewish infants, and why may not Christians be favored with it also?

The covenant made with Abraham, and with his *seed*, Gen. xvii, 7, included *infants*. This covenant is not repealed or disannulled; (II. Art.) it was intended to extend to Christians, and their *seed*; (I.) it is confirmed by God to Christ, Gal. iii, 17, i. e. it was made with Christ, considered as including all his members in him. As circumcision of old was the sign of admitting persons into this covenant; so now baptism is the *sign* of admitting persons into the *same* individual covenant; (V.) therefore it must be administered to the same persons, i. e. to infants, as well as to the adult. When the covenant is the same, the privileges and promises the same, the seal must have been the same, if it had not been changed; and the seed of Abraham to inherit must be the same also, unless there is some alteration made in the Gospel. The seed in covenant included infants; and therefore infants are still part of that seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham had a right to the seal of

the covenant ; their right still continues as the covenant does, and therefore they are to be admitted, infants in particular, to baptism, the present seal of this covenant.

If God thought fit to make any alterations in any circumstance of this covenant, it seems necessary that he should give notice of it in the Gospel. Accordingly as he thought fit to change the old sign of circumcision for baptism, so he has, in the Gospel, expressly warned us of the change, Acts xv, 24 ; xxi, 21, 25 ; Gal. v, 2, 3. And as he chose to make one alteration, with regard to the persons to whom the seal of the said covenant should be applied, and to ordain that females as well as males, should be baptised, so he has expressly told us of this alteration in the Gospel, Acts viii, 12 ; xvi, 14, 15 ; Gal. iii, 27, 28. In like manner it must be concluded, that if God would have had a farther alteration made, if infants of believing parents, that were formerly to partake of the seal of this covenant, were, upon the coming of Christ to partake of it no more ; undoubtedly God would have given us express warning of it, and have told us in the Gospel, that though infants, before Christ came, were in the covenant, now they are to be shut of it. But as the Gospel says no such thing, it seems to me certain it cannot be true. It is then incumbent upon those who oppose infant baptism, if they would make their point good, positively to prove this by texts which expressly declare that Christ has cast infants out of the covenant, though be-

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fore they were in it. But no such text can be produced : therefore it appears they *continue* in covenant, and have still a right to the seal of it, which is *baptism*.

It will be in vain here to urge, that the Scripture sufficiently declares against applying this seal of the covenant to infants, by making faith and repentance the conditions of baptism. For this kind of arguing would as well prove, that infants heretofore were not qualified for circumcision, which yet no man will assert. As this argument would prove too much, it must be looked upon as proving nothing. It will be needful to add as a distinct head, that

VII. The texts which speak of faith as the term of baptism, do not at all imply, that infants are not to be baptized. In the case just now mentioned there is a parallel between baptism and circumcision. If a heathen heretofore was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and did hereupon desire to be circumcised, he was admitted to circumcision upon the account of his faith in the God of Israel. And till he professed this faith, he could not lawfully be circumcised. And if a Jewish prophet had been inviting a set of heathens to Judaism, and circumcision, he would have been forced to talk in such a manner as this, viz. "Believe in the one true God, and ye shall be circumcised. He that believeth, and is circumcised, shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be condemned. Repent of your idolatry, and other sins, and be circumcised. Circumcision now saveth us, not the

putting away a bit of flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward the true God. Arise then and be circumcised, and put away your sins." In this manner the Jewish prophet must have spoken to his heathen audience. And if he had succeeded, and made proselytes, the history of it must have been expressed in such a language as this, viz. "When the heathens believed the prophet preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were circumcised. A certain convert said to the Jewish prophet, What should hinder my being circumcised? The prophet answered, If you believe with all your heart, you may. He replied, I believe that there is one God, and that Moses is his prophet. And hereupon he circumcised him. Others hearing, believed, and were circumcised." This, I apprehend, must have been the language, in case the prophet had preached to a heathen nation, and proselyted them. And yet, I suppose, that no one would, from this kind of language, infer, that infants were not to be circumcised, or that actual faith in God was so universally necessary to circumcision, as that infants were not to receive it for want of actual faith. As this will be allowed by every one, it must be acknowledged also, by parity of reason, that the very same expressions, when in the same circumstances applied to baptism, cannot imply that infants are not to be baptized. All I now contend for is, that they do not even *seem* to imply, that infants are not to be baptized; for this they cannot do, unless in the case above

represented, they did also imply, that infants were not heretofore to be circumcised. As it will be allowed, they would not have implied this, they cannot consistently be thought to imply the other.

If it had been fit to have continued circumcision as the sign of God's covenant, and Christ had actually continued it, when he gave his apostles a commission to proselyte the Gentile nations, I do not see how he could have expressed his thoughts better than this, "Go, proselyte all nations, circumcising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" i. e. prove to the Gentiles, that Jesus is the Christ, and when they profess to believe this, circumcise them. Would the apostles, or any one else, have inferred from hence, that infants, not having actual faith, were not to be circumcised? Nay, rather on the other hand, the apostles would have reasoned thus: "The sign of God's covenant, circumcision, has hitherto been *confined* to one nation, even that of the Israelites; but now Christ has commanded us to extend it to *all* the nations of the earth; he has ordered us to go and proselyte all nations, and circumcise them. Surely it is his intention that we should take our *pattern* from the practice of circumcision among the Jews. He cannot therefore be supposed to mean, that we must only circumcise grown men, who are capable of believing the Gospel, and profess so to do. It is evident he intends, that when we shall have circumcised

such, we should next circumcise their *male* children ; and that, in *after* generations, the males among them should be circumcised the eighth day. Thus it was at the first institution. Abraham was first circumcised, then his children, of whatsoever ages they happened to be ; and in after generations their children were circumcised on the eighth day. This is a direction to us. And when we are bid to '*go, proselyte all nations, circumcising them,*' we plainly see, we are not forbidden to circumcise infants ; but, on the contrary, are ordered to imitate this example of our father Abraham." I observed, if circumcision had been retained, as the seal of the covenant, and the same commission had been given to the apostles, as now was given them, only the word *circumcise* used instead of *baptize*, no one would have imagined, that form of expression would in the least have interfered with the circumcision of infants. It is as certain then that the same form of words, applied to baptism, cannot in the least interfere with the baptism of infants.

These considerations, I think, fully take off the force of all the objections that men think they find in the Scripture against the baptism of infants. If there be any thing in the nature of baptism, as a seal of the covenant, which confines it to such as believe, there must have been the same limiting nature in circumcision, which was a seal of the same covenant. But as this is certainly false, the other cannot be true. If an infant was not, by reason of his



age, unqualified to receive the sign of circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of faith," an infant cannot now, by reason of his age, be consistently thought unqualified for baptism, which is a seal of the same.

Farther to confirm this point, if it needs confirmation, it may be observed, that the same forms of expression, which are urged out of the New Testament, to prove that infants are not qualified for baptism, for want of actual faith and repentance, would equally prove them unqualified for salvation. From Christ's saying, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved," some have inferred that a person must actually believe or else he cannot be baptized. With as much strength of reason they might infer, that a person cannot be saved unless he actually believe; especially since it is added, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Yet it is acknowledged that though infants do not believe, yet they shall not be damned. It is evident then to all, that this text must be interpreted as speaking *only* of the *adults*, who were capable of hearing and believing the Gospel. Since then it does not at all speak of infants, they may be saved, and may be baptized too, notwithstanding they are not believers. The method of proving that they may be *saved without faith*, will as necessarily demonstrate, that they may be baptized without their own faith, notwithstanding any thing that is laid down in this text. Thus all the objections against infant baptism are at once cut off.

VIII. In the Christian church from its earliest ages, and we think from the apostles' time, it has been the custom to baptize the infant children of professed Christians.

To prove this I shall produce a few witnesses among many. 1. Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the apostles, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, page 59, plainly speaks of baptism, as being to Christians in the stead of circumcision. And in his *Apology for the Christians*, near the beginning, he says, "Several persons among us of sixty or seventy years old, of both sexes, were disciplined," (or made disciples,) "to Christ in or from their childhood." Please to observe, that Justin's word, *εμαθητευθησαν*, *were disciplined*, or *made disciples*, is the very same word that had been used by St. Matthew, xxviii, 19, in expressing our Saviour's command, *μαθητευσατε*, *disciple all nations*. And it was done to these persons, Justin says, in or from their childhood. And he wrote that *Apology* within forty years of the death of the apostles: and seventy years, reckoned back from that time, will reach into the midst of the apostles' time.

2. Irenæus, born about the time of St. John's death, in his treatise, *Adv. Hæres. lib. 2, cap. 3*, speaking of Christ, says, "Not disdaining, nor going in a way above human nature, nor breaking in his own person the law which he had set for mankind: but sanctifying every several age by the likeness it has to him. For he came to save all persons by himself: *all*, I mean, who.

by him, are *regenerated* unto God ; *infants*, and little ones, and children, and youths, and elderly persons. Therefore, he went through the several ages : for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants," &c.

This testimony, which reckons infants among those that are regenerated, is plain and full. Dr. Wall has largely shown that the word regenerating does, particularly in the writings of Irenæus, and in the usual phrase of those times, signify baptizing ; he mentions some places, which expressly declare, that Christ was *regenerated* by John ; meaning that he was *baptized* by him.

Near the time that Irenæus wrote the above treatise, Clemens Alexandrinus wrote his *Pædagog*, wherein he expressly says, "The word regeneration is the name of baptism," (l. 1, c. 6, near the beginning :) his thus plainly declaring that regenerating is the common name for baptizing, does very much confirm the argument taken from Irenæus, who asserts that infants were regenerated unto God.

Please to take notice how near this man was to the apostles' times. Irenæus himself says, l. v, c. 30, that the revelation made to St. John in Patmos, was but a little before his time, and that revelation was five or six years before St. John's death. In an age so nigh the apostles, and in a place where one of them had so lately lived, the Christians could not be ignorant what had been done in their time, in a matter so public as the baptizing, or not baptizing of infants.

3. Origen is not only express for the baptizing of infants, but gives his reason for it : in his eighth homily or sermon on Leviticus, c. 12, he thus says, "Hear David speaking: 'I was,' says he, 'shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me : ' showing, that every soul that is born in the flesh is polluted with the filth of sin and iniquity : and that therefore that was said, which we mentioned before : that 'none is free from pollution. though his life be but the length of one day.' "

"Beside all this, let it be considered, what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins, infants are also by the usage of the church, baptized ; when, if there was nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them."

Again, in his homily on Luke xiv, he says as follows : "Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins ? Or when have they sinned ? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense that we mentioned even now : 'None is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon earth ?' And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized."

Yet farther, in the fifth book of his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, he says thus, "And also in the law it is commanded, that a sacrifice be offered for every child that is

born; 'a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; of which one is for a sin-offering, the other for a burnt-offering.' For what sin is this one pigeon offered? Can the child that is new born have committed any sin? It has even *then* sin, for which the sacrifice is commanded to be offered; from which even he, 'whose life is but of one day,' is denied to be free.

"For this also it was, that the church had from the apostles an order *to give baptism to infants*. For they to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there is in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit."

The reader is desired to observe, that Origen not only says, that it was the *custom* of the church to baptize infants, but he expressly affirms, "*That the church received an ORDER from the apostles to give baptism even to infants.*"

4. There is one circumstance that makes Origen a more competent witness to give evidence, whether the baptizing of infants had been in use time out of mind, or not, than most other authors that we have left to us of that age; because he was himself of a family that had been Christian for a long time. The other witnesses that I have mentioned, except Irenæus, must have been themselves baptized in adult age; because they were of heathen parents. But Origen's father was a martyr for Christ in the persecution under Severus, the year after the apostles, 102. And Eusebius (in his his-

tory, book 6, ch. 19,) assures us that his forefathers had been Christians for several generations.

Now, since Origen was born in the eighty-fifth year after the apostles, (for he was seventeen years old when his father suffered martyrdom,) his grandfather, or at least his great grandfather, must have lived in the apostles' time. And as he could not be ignorant whether he himself was baptized in infancy, so he had no farther than his own family to go, to inquire what was practised in the time of the apostles.

Beside that, he was a very learned man, and could not be ignorant of the use of the churches; and in most of which he had also travelled; for as he was born and bred at Alexandria, so it appears out of Eusebius's history, b. 6, that he had lived in Greece, and at Rome, and in Capadocia and Arabia, and spent the main part of his life in Syria and Palestine.

5. What, I apprehend, very much strengthens the truth of infant baptism, that it is of a divine original, is this, "About one hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John the apostle, there was an assembly of sixty-six bishops, who spoke of infant baptism as a known, established, and uncontested practice." One Fidus questioned, whether infants were to be baptized so soon as between two and three days after their birth, and whether it would not be better to defer their baptism till they were eight days old, as was observed in circumcision; which scruples he proposed to this assembly, and in which he

desired their resolution, which they sent in a letter to him; part of which I shall transcribe.

“Cyprian, and the rest of the bishops, who were present at the council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus our brother, greeting—

“We read your letter, most dear brother; but as to the case of infants—whereas you judge, ‘that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born; and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, so that none should be baptized, and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born.’ we were all in our assembly of the contrary opinion.

“We judge that no person is to be hindered from obtaining the grace by the law that is now appointed; and that the spiritual circumcision ought not to be restrained by the circumcision that was according to the flesh: but that all are to be admitted to the grace of Christ; since Peter, speaking of the acts of the apostles, says, ‘The Lord has shown me that no person is to be called common, or unclean.’

“This, therefore, dear brother, was our opinion in the assembly; that it is not for us to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful, and benign, and affectionate to all: which rule, as it holds for all, so we think it is more especially to be observed in reference to infants newly born; to whom our help and the divine mercy is rather to be granted; because by their cries and tears at their first entrance into the world, they do imitate nothing so much, as that they implore compassion.”

From this piece of history it appears, that both the person who moved the doubt, and all the persons who resolved it, unanimously agreed in this, that infants were to be baptized, and that it was the settled custom of the church to baptize them. If the assembly had been against infant baptism, they would have answered, "It is so far from being necessary to baptize children on the eighth day after their birth, that they ought not to be baptized at all, till they are of age to judge and act for themselves." But none of those bishops was in this sentiment. They all looked upon it as a thing uncontested, that infants were to be baptized.

If we look back from this time to the space that had passed from the apostles' time, which was but one hundred and fifty years, we must conclude that it was easy then to know the practice of Christians in the apostles' days, for some of these sixty-six bishops may be thought to be at this time sixty or seventy years old themselves, which reaches almost to half the space: and at that time when they were infants, there must have been several alive, that were born within the apostles' age. And such could not be ignorant whether infants were baptized in that age, when they themselves were some of those infants. And as there was no dispute, or difference of opinion, (as there must have been among so many, if any innovation had been made; for it is here expressly said, there was not one of Fidy's mind,) that infant baptism must be delayed till the eighth day; much



less then were there any of opinion that it was not to be administered at all.

“In a doctrinal point,” as Mr. Baxter well observes, “a mistake is easier, than in a bare narration of some one fact: but in a matter of fact of so public notice, and which so many thousands were partakers in, as baptism was, how could they be ignorant?”

Suppose it were a question now among us, whether persons were baptized at age only, or in infancy also, eighty years before we were born; were it not easy to know the truth, what by report, and what by records?

I shall conclude what I have to remark on this testimony with observing, that we see here confirmed what was said before, that baptism was reckoned to be to Christians in the room of circumcision. For it was upon that account that Fidus thought it must be at the time of the old circumcision; and the bishops of the council, though denying that, do call it the spiritual [or Christian] circumcision.

6. Ambrose commenting on those words, Luke i, 17, where the angel prophesies of John the Baptist, “he shall go before him in the spirit and powers of Elias;” after having shown, in several particulars, how John in his office did resemble Elias, and having mentioned that miracle of Elias dividing the river Jordan, adds thus: “But perhaps this may seem to be fulfilled in our time and in the apostles’ time. For that returning of the river waters backward toward the spring head, which was caused by

Elias, when the river was divided (as the Scripture says, 'Jordan was driven back,') signified the sacrament of the laver of salvation, which was afterward to be instituted; by which those infants that are baptized, are reformed back again from wickedness, or a corrupt state, to the primitive state of their nature."

He means they are freed from the guilt of original sin, and in some sense reduced back to the primitive state, in which man was before that happened. He plainly speaks of infants, as baptized in the apostles' time, as well as in his own; and makes John, in baptizing infants for the reformation of their nature to the primitive purity of it, to resemble Elias in turning back the waters to their spring head.

Austin, in his treatise *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. 4, c. 23, having had occasion to speak of the penitent thief, who obtained salvation without baptism, shows, that that is no more an argument against the necessity of baptism, where it may be had, than the example of baptized infants obtaining salvation without faith, is an argument against the necessity of faith, where the subject is capable of it. Near the conclusion of the fourth book he says, "And as the thief who by necessity went without baptism was saved, because by his piety he had it spiritually. so where baptism is had, though the party by necessity go without that [faith] which the thief had, yet he is saved.

"Which the whole body of the church holds as delivered to them, in the case of little infants

baptized: who certainly cannot yet believe with the heart to righteousness, or confess with the mouth to salvation as the thief could; nay, by their crying and noise, while the sacrament is administering, they disturb the holy mysteries; and yet no Christian man of any sort will say, they are baptized to no purpose.

“And if any one do ask for divine authority in this matter, though that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by counsels, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing ordered by the authority of the apostles: yet we may beside take a true estimate, how much the sacrament of baptism does avail infants, by the circumcision which God’s former people received.” In what follows he most plainly declares, that baptism is to the Christian infants what circumcision was to the Jewish.

Though Austin speaks of infant baptism in this place but occasionally, his words are a full evidence that it was then universally practised, and had been so beyond the memory of any man, or of any record: that they took it to be a thing that had not been enacted by any council, but had been in use from the beginning of Christianity. And they had then but three hundred years to look back to the times of the apostles, whereas we now have upward of sixteen hundred. And many writings and records which are now lost, were then extant and easily known.

It deserves a particular remark, that most of

these witnesses for infant baptism were not only faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, but were faithful unto death, joyfully suffering martyrdom for the truth. Surely this is a great accession to the strength of their testimony.

All these things put together, seem to prove that infant baptism was practised in the church of Christ from the beginning, and, consequently, that it is of an apostolical and divine original.

As for the first four hundred years, there appears only one man, Tertullian, that advised the delay of infant baptism in some cases, and one, Gregory, that did perhaps practise such delay in the case of his children, but no society of men so thinking, or so practising; so in the next seven hundred years, there is not so much as one man to be found that either spoke for or practised such delay; but all the contrary. And when one sect among the Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion: and those of them that held that opinion quickly dwindled away and disappeared; there being no more heard of holding that tenet, till the rising of the German antipædobaptists, in the year 1522. “And all the national churches now in the world do profess and practise infant baptism.”

This brings to my remembrance a very clear proof for the baptism of infants, which much satisfied the mind of the great and good Mr. Baxter; I shall relate it in his own words. “I am fully satisfied that Mr. Tombs cannot show

me any society, (I think not one man,) that ever opened their mouths against the baptism of infants, till about two hundred years ago ; which confirms me much that it is from the apostles' time, or else some one would have been found as an opposer of it ; even as I profess, seriously, that it much satisfieth my conscience, that Christ and his apostles did never shut out the infants of believing Jews, (and consequently of believing Gentiles,) from being members of his visible church, in that I never find in all the New Testament, one word of exception, arguing, murmuring, or dissatisfaction against it : whereas, it cannot possibly be conceived, but those Jews who kept such a stir before they would let go circumcision, the sign of church membership, when yet they had baptism, another sign, would undoubtedly have been much more scandalized at the unchurching of all their children, and would much hardlier have let go that privilege of their church membership, or at least have raised some scruple about it, which might have occasioned one word of satisfaction from some one of the apostles ; especially when Paul calls them holy, and Christ saith, ' Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.' I know not how Mr. Tombs and such others think on these things ; but, for my part, they stick so close to my conscience that I dare not say, Christ would have no infants received into his visible church among the number of Christians, when I find he once placed them in the church ; and neither

Mr. Tombs, nor any man breathing, can show me one word of Scripture where ever Christ did put them out again : and yet these men pretend to stand to the determination of Scripture. I would this one thing were impartially considered."

With regard to the mode of baptizing, I would only add, Christ no where, as far as I can find, requires *dipping*, but only *baptizing* : which word, many most eminent for learning and piety have declared, signifies to *pour on*, or *sprinkle*, as well as to *dip*. As our Lord has graciously given us a word of such extensive meaning, doubtless the parent, or the person to be baptized, if he be adult, ought to choose which way he best approves. What God has left *indifferent*, it becomes not *man* to make necessary.

I think it proper in this place to subjoin what Dr. Watts has declared concerning the signification of this word. "The Greek word *baptizo* (says he) signifies *to wash* any thing properly *by water coming over it* ; now there are several ways of such washing, viz. *sprinkling* water on it in a small quantity, *pouring* water on it in a larger quantity, or *dipping* it under water, either in part or in whole : and since this seems to be left undetermined in Scripture to one particular mode ; therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance. Now that the Greek word signifies *washing* a thing in general by water coming over it, and not always *dipping*, as argued by learned men, not only from ancient Greek

authors, but from the New Testament itself, as Luke xi, 38, 'The Pharisees marvelled that Jesus had not first washed before dinner;' in Greek, that he was not first *baptized*; and can it be supposed that they would have him *dip* himself in water? Mark vii, 4, 'The Pharisees, when they come from the market, eat not except they are washed;' in Greek, except they were *baptized*; surely it cannot mean except they were dipped. And if this should be restrained to signify washing their hands only, yet it does not signify necessarily dipping them; for the manner of washing their hands of old was by pouring water on them, as 'Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah,' 2 Kings iii, 11. Yet farther, they practised the washing of tables, (in Greek, *baptism of beds*,) as well as *cups* and *vessels*. Now beds could not usually be washed by dipping, Heb. ix, 10. The Jews had divers washings prescribed by Moses, (in Greek, *baptisms*,) which were sprinkling and pouring water on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. 'The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, in their passage through the Red Sea, at their march from Egypt,' 1 Cor. x, 2. Not that they were dipped in the water, but they were sprinkled by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by.

Beside, pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism, viz. the sprinkling the blood of

Christ on the conscience, or the pouring out of the Spirit on the person baptized, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the Spirit ; all which are the things signified in baptism as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby."

I conclude, since this controversy has difficulties attending it, persons of an honest and sincere soul, in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions : but the things wherein we agree, are so important as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things wherein we differ. Our brethren who reject infant baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance : we all agree that children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the privileges which Scripture admits, and that they should grow up under all possible obligations to duty ; and since each of us desires to find out the will of Christ, and practise it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing that we should be angry with each other, because some of us are devoted to God and Christ by this ceremony a little *sooner* or a little *later* than others ; or because some devote their children to God in baptism, as a claim of privileges and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves and are capable of acting therein : or because some of us think this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body should be immersed in it ; others




suppose a little is sufficient, and that he who has the face and head washed in this solemnity, has as true a significancy of Gospel benefits and obligations, as he who has his whole body put under water, since our Saviour thought so when he washed Peter's feet, John xiii, 10. In short, where faith in Christ, and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, are made necessary to salvation, and agreed upon by us all, it is a pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy contentions among the disciples of the blessed Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

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## REMARKS ON INFANT BAPTISM.

BY H. S. BOYD, ESQ.

IF my memory be correct, some writers among a highly respectable class of modern Christians have asserted that infant baptism was not known or practised in the Christian church for the first four hundred, or even five hundred years after Christ. I now send you a short but valuable passage of St. Chrysostom, which I met with some years ago when studying that father's writings. His works are so voluminous, that it would be an almost endless task for a person, not previously acquainted with them, to search out passages to illustrate the history of any particular opinion. It is therefore



probable, that the testimony which I am about to adduce has not been brought forward by any advocate of infant baptism. In an oration to the people of Constantinople, pronounced by Chrysostom after his return from his first exile, he repeats a conversation which the Empress Eudoxia had lately held with him. Among other things, she said, *Μεμνημαι οτι δια των χειρων των δων, ΤΑ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ ΤΑ ΕΜΑ ΕΒΑΠΤΙΣΘΗ*: "I remember, that by thy hands MY INFANTS (or LITTLE CHILDREN) WERE BAPTIZED."

On the above passage, I think it necessary to offer a few observations: 1st, It is well known that the venerable prelate of Constantinople was a rigid disciplinarian, and was strictly attached to the forms and usages as well as to the doctrine of the church. It is equally notorious that he never said any thing nor did any thing to ingratiate himself with the royal family, but that, in his official character, he lashed their vices unceasingly and unsparingly. He opposed Eudoxia in particular; and this opposition at length cost him his life. It is therefore certain that he would never have consented to baptize the children of the empress, if infant baptism had not been generally administered in his day. 2dly, At the period when this conversation took place, the young Prince Theodosius was only two years old. His excellent sister, Pulcheria, was four years old. Whether all the rest of Eudoxia's children were born before that period, I have not at present the means of ascertaining; but this is of no importance. We are absolutely

certain that the archbishop baptized at least two of them, and this is quite sufficient for our purpose. 3dly, The discourse which I have quoted was pronounced by Chrysostom about the year 403. One of these baptisms must, therefore, have occurred at least as early as 401.

In the eighth volume of Savile's edition of Chrysostom, there is a life of him, written by George, patriarch of Alexandria. At the end of this life you will find the oration which I have cited above. It is one of the finest specimens of the extemporaneous eloquence of St. Chrysostom.

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### TRACT XIII.

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## CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

BY REV. JOHN WESLEY.

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LET us strongly and explicitly exhort all believers to go on to perfection. That we may all speak the same thing, we ask once for all, Shall we defend this perfection, or give it up? We all agree to defend it, meaning thereby (as we did from the beginning) salvation from all sin, properly so called, by the love of God and man filling our heart. Some say, "This cannot be attained till we have been refined by the

fire of purgatory." Others, "Nay, it will be attained as soon as the soul and the body part." But others say, "It may be attained before we die: a moment after is too late." Is it so, or not? We are all agreed, we may be saved from all sin before death, i. e. from all sinful tempers and desires. The substance then is settled. But as to the circumstances, is the change gradual or instantaneous? It is both the one and the other. "But should we, in preaching, insist both on one and the other? Certainly we should insist on the gradual change; and that earnestly and continually. And are there not reasons why we should insist on the instantaneous change? If there be such a blessed change before death, should we not encourage all believers to expect it? And the rather, because constant experience shows, the more earnestly they expect this, the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work of God go on in their souls; the more careful are they to grow in grace; the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on all the ordinances of God: whereas just the contrary effects are observed, whenever this expectation ceases. They are saved by hope, by this hope of a total change, with a gradual increasing salvation. Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still, or rather decreases daily: therefore, whoever would advance the gradual change in believers, should strongly insist on the instantaneous.

What I purpose in the following papers is, to

give a plain and distinct account of the doctrine of Christian Perfection.

For this purpose I shall endeavor to show, 1. In what sense Christians *are not*, 2. In what sense they *are perfect*.

I. In what sense they are not. They *are not perfect in knowledge*. They are not free from *ignorance*, no, nor from *mistake*. We are no more to expect any living man to be *infallible* than to be omniscient. They are not free from *infirmities*; such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such in another kind are, impropriety of language, an ungracefulness of pronunciation, to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. N. B. From such infirmities as these, none are perfectly freed, till their spirit returns to God. Neither can we expect till then to be freed from *temptation*: for *the servant is not above his master*. But neither in this sense is there any *absolute perfection* on earth. There is no perfection which does not admit of a continual increase.

II. In what sense then are they *perfect*? Observe, we are not now speaking of babes in Christ, but adult Christians. But even babes in Christ are so far perfect as not to *commit sin*. This St. John affirms expressly.

“But does not the Scripture say, *A just man sinneth seven times a day*?” It does not. Indeed it says, “A just man falleth seven times.” But this is quite another thing. For, first, the words

*a day*, are not in the text. Secondly, here is no mention of *falling into sin* at all. What is here mentioned is, *falling into temporal affliction*.

"But St. James says, chap iii, 2, 'In many things we offend all.' " True; but who are the persons here spoken of? Why, those *many masters* or teachers whom God had not sent; not the apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word *we* (used by a figure of speech, common in all other, as well as the inspired writings) the apostle could not possibly include himself, or any other true believer, appears, first, from the ninth verse, "Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we men." Surely not *we apostles*! Not *we believers*! Secondly, from the words preceding the text: "My brethren, be not many masters or teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all." We! Who! Not the apostles, nor true believers, but they who were to "receive the greater condemnation," because of those many offences. Nay, thirdly, the verse itself proves that "we offend all," cannot be spoken either of all men, or of all Christians. For in it immediately follows the mention of a man who "offends not," as the *we* first mentioned did: from whom therefore he is professedly contradistinguished and pronounced "a perfect man."

"But St. John himself says: 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.' And, 'if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.' "

I answer, 1. The tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: "If we say we have no sin" in the former, being explained by "If we say we have not sinned," in the latter verse: 2. The point under consideration is not, whether we have or have not sinned *heretofore*; and neither of these verses asserts that we do sin or commit sin *now*: 3. The ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness." As if he had said, I have before affirmed, "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." And no man can say, I need it not: I have no sin to be cleansed from. "If we say we have no sin," that "we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves" and *make* God a liar. But "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just" not only "to forgive us our sins," but also to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness," that we may "go and sin no more." In conformity therefore both to the doctrine of St. John, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion, A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.

This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, yea, though he be but a babe in Christ. But it is only of grown Christians it can be affirmed, they are in such a sense perfect, as, secondly, to be freed from evil desires and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful desires. Indeed, whence should they spring? Out of the heart of man? But if the heart be no longer

evil, then evil desires no longer proceed out of it; "for a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit."

And as they are freed from evil desires, so likewise from evil tempers. Every one of these can say, with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward, as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, "I live not:" my evil nature, the body of sin is destroyed; and positively, "Christ liveth in me," and therefore all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed, both these, "Christ liveth in me, and I live not," are inseparably connected. For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?

He therefore who liveth in these Christians, hath "purified their hearts by faith:" inasmuch, that every one that has Christ in him, "the hope of glory, purifieth himself even as he is pure." He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly in heart. He is pure from evil desire and self-will; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle. I say in the common sense of the word: for he is *angry*, while he is grieved for the sinner. He feels a displacency at every offence against God, and tender compassion to the offender.

Thus doth Jesus "save his people from their sins," not only from outward sins, but from the



sins of their hearts. "True," say some, "but not till death, not in this world." Nay, St. John say, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." The apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom he flatly affirms, that not only at or after death, but *in this world* they are *as their Master*.

Exactly agreeable to this, are his words in the first chapter: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And again; "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, it is evident, the apostle here speaks of a deliverance wrought in this world. For he saith not, The blood of Christ *will cleanse* (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment,) but it *cleanseth* at the time present, us living Christians *from all sin*. And it is equally evident, that if any sin remain, we are not cleansed from all sin. If *any* unrighteousness remain in the soul, it is not cleansed from all unrighteousness. Neither let any say that this relates to justification only, or the cleansing us from the guilt of sin; first, because this is confounding together what the apostle clearly distinguishes, who mentions first, *to forgive us our sins*, and then *to cleanse us*

*from all unrighteousness*: secondly, because this is asserting justification by works, in the strongest sense possible: it is making all inward as well as all outward holiness, necessarily previous to justification. For if the cleansing here spoken of, is no other than the cleansing us from the guilt of sin, then we are not cleansed from guilt, that is, not justified, unless on condition of walking in the light, as he is in the light. It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect, as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil desires and evil tempers.

This great gift of God, the salvation of their souls, is no other than the image of God stamped on their hearts. It is a "renewal in the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of him that created them." God hath now laid "the axe unto the root of the tree, purifying their hearts by faith," and "cleansing all the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit." Having this hope, that they shall see God as he is, they "purify themselves even as he is pure," and are "holy, as he that hath called them is holy, in all manner of conversation." "Not that they have already attained" all that they shall attain, "or are already" (in this sense) "perfect." But they daily "go on from strength to strength;" beholding now, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."

And "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," such liberty "from the law of sin and death," as the children of this world will not believe, though a man declare it unto them. "The Son hath made them free" who are thus "born of God," from that great root of sin and bitterness, *pride*. They feel that *all their sufficiency is of God*, that it is he alone who is in *all their thoughts*, and "worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." They feel that *it is not they that speak, but the Spirit of their Father who speaketh* in them, and whatsoever is done by their hands, *the Father who is in them, he doeth the works*. So that God is to them all in all, and they feel themselves as nothing in his sight. They are freed from *self-will*, as desiring nothing but the holy and perfect will of God, and continually crying in their inmost soul, "Father, thy will be done." At all times their souls are even and calm; their hearts are steadfast and immovable. Their peace, flowing as a river, "passeth all understanding," and they "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Not that every one is a child of the devil, till he is thus renewed in love. On the contrary, whoever has a sure confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, he is a child of God, and if he abide in him, an heir of all the promises. Neither ought he in any wise to *cast away his confidence*, or to deny the faith he has received, because it is weak, or because it is *tried with fire*,

so that his soul is "in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Neither dare we affirm, as some have done, that *all this salvation* is given *at once*. There is indeed an *instantaneous* (as well as *gradual*) work of God in his children : and there wants not, we know, a cloud of witnesses, who have received in one moment, either a clear sense of the forgiveness of their sins, or the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit. But we do not know a single instance in any place, of a person receiving *in one and the same moment*, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a clean heart.

Indeed how God *may* work we cannot tell ; but the general manner wherein he *does* work is this : those who once trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, that they were "rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing," are by the Spirit of God, applying his word, convinced that they are poor and naked. All the things that they have done, are brought to their remembrance, and set in array before them, so that they see the wrath of God hanging over their heads, and feel that they deserve the damnation of hell. In their trouble they cry unto the Lord, and he shows them that he hath taken away their sins, and opens the kingdom of heaven in their hearts ; "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Sorrow and pain are fled away, and *sin has no more dominion over them*. Knowing they are *justified freely* through faith in Christ's blood, they "have peace with

God, through Jesus Christ ;” “ they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,” and “ the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts.”

In this peace they remain for days, or weeks, or months, and commonly suppose they shall not know war any more : till some of their old enemies, their bosom sins, or the sins which *did* most easily beset them (perhaps anger or desire) assault them again, and thrust sore at them that they may fall. Then arises fear, that they shall not endure to the end, and often doubt, whether God has not forgotten them, or whether they did not deceive themselves, in thinking their sins were forgiven. Under these clouds, especially if they reason with the devil, they go *mourning* all the day long. But it is seldom long before their Lord answers for himself, sending them the Holy Ghost to *comfort* them, to bear witness continually with their spirits, that they are the children of God. Then they are indeed *meek*, and gentle, and teachable, even as a little child. And now first do they see the ground of their hearts, which God before would not disclose unto them, lest the soul should fail before him, and the spirit which he had made. Now they see all the hidden abominations there, the depth of pride, self-will, and hell, yet having the witness in themselves, “ Thou art an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ,” even in the midst of this fiery trial, which continually heightens both the strong sense they then have of their inability to help themselves, and the inexpressible *hunger* they feel *after* a full renewal in the image of God in

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"righteousness and true holiness." Then God is mindful of the desire of them that fear him, and gives them a single eye, and a pure heart: he stamps upon them his own image and superscription: he createth them anew in Christ Jesus: he *cometh unto* them with his Son and blessed Spirit, and fixing his abode in their souls, bringeth them into the *rest* which *remaineth for the people of God*.

To cast a fuller light on this important subject, I shall lay before the reader the minutes of several of our general conferences on this weighty, this momentous doctrine.

1. On Monday, June 25, 1744, our first conference began, six clergymen and all our preachers being present. The next morning we seriously considered the doctrine of sanctification or Christian perfection. The question asked concerning it, and the substance of the answers given, were as follow:—

Q. What is it to be *sanctified*?

A. To be renewed in the image of God, in "righteousness and true holiness."

Q. What is implied in being a *perfect Christian*?

A. The loving God with all your heart, and mind, and soul, Deut. vi, 5.

Q. Does this imply that *all* inward sin is taken away?

A. Undoubtedly: or how can we be said to be *saved from all our uncleanness*? Ezekiel xxxvi, 29.

2. Our second conference began August 1,

1745. The next morning we spoke of sanctification as follows:—

Q. When does inward sanctification begin?

A. In the moment a man is justified. Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of sin till he is *sanctified throughout*. From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace.

Q. Is this ordinarily given till a little before death?

A. It is not to those who expect it no sooner.

Q. In what manner should we preach sanctification?

A. Always by way of promise; always *drawing* rather than *driving*.

3. Our third conference began Tuesday, May 26, 1746.

In this we carefully read over the minutes of the two preceding conferences, to observe whether any thing contained therein might be retrenched or altered on more mature consideration. But we did not see cause to alter in any respect what we had agreed on before.

4. Our fourth conference began on Thursday, June 16, 1747. As several persons were present who did not believe the doctrine of Christian perfection, we agreed to examine it from the foundation.

In order to this, it was asked,

Q. "How much is allowed by our brethren who differ from us, with regard to entire sanctification?"

A. They grant, 1. That every one must be

entirely sanctified in the article of death : 2. That till then, a believer may daily grow in grace, come nearer and nearer to perfection : 3. That we ought to be continually pressing after it, and to exhort all others so to do.

Q. What is the point wherein we divide ?

A. It is this : should we expect to be saved from *all* sin before the article of death ?

Q. Is there any clear Scripture *promise* of this, That God will save us from *all* sin ?

A. There is, Psalm cxxx, 8 ; “ He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

This is more largely expressed in the prophecy of Ezekiel : “ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from *all* your filthiness, and from *all* your idols will I cleanse you ; I will also save you from *all your uncleanness*,” chap. xxxvi, ver. 25, 29. No promise can be more clear. And to this the apostle plainly refers in that exhortation, “ Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” 2 Cor. vii, 1. Equally clear and express is that ancient promise, “ The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,” Deut. xxx, 6.

Q. But does any *assertion* answerable to this, occur in the New Testament ?

A. There does : and that laid down in the plainest terms. So, 1 John iii, 8, “ For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil :” *the*



*works of the devil*, without any limitation or restriction : but all sin is *the work of the devil*. Parallel to which is the assertion of St. Paul, Eph. v, 25, 27, " Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it ; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it might be holy and without blemish :"

And to the same effect is his assertion in the eighth of the Romans, verses 3, 4 ; " God sent his Son, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Q. Does the New Testament afford any farther ground for expecting to be saved from *all sin* ?

A. Undoubtedly it does, both in those *prayers* and *commands*, which are equivalent to the strongest assertions.

Q. What prayers do you mean ?

A. Prayers for entire sanctification, which, were there no such thing, would be mere mockery of God. Such in particular are, 1. " Deliver us from evil." Now when this is done, when we are delivered from all evil, there can be no sin remaining. 2. " Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one," John xvii, 20, 21, 23. 3. " I bow my knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, that ye

being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii, 14, &c. 4. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God, your whole spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Thess. v, 23.

Q. What *command* is there to the same effect?

A. 1. "Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v, 48. 2. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii, 37. But if the love of God fill *all the heart*, there can be no sin there.

Q. But how does it appear, that this is to be done before the article of death?

A. From the very nature of a command, which is not given to the dead but to the living. Therefore, "thou shalt love God with all thy heart," cannot mean, thou shalt do this when thou diest, but while thou livest.

2. From express text of Scripture. 1. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from *all iniquity*, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, *zeal*

ous of good works," Tit. ii, 11-14. 2. "He hath raised up a horn of salvation for us—to perform the mercy promised to our fathers; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holiness, and righteousness, before him *all the days of our life*," Luke i, 69, &c.

Q. Is there any *example* in Scripture, of persons who had attained to this?

A. Yes: St. John and all those of whom he says, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world," 1 John iv, 17.

Q. Are we not apt to have a secret distaste to any who say they are saved from all sin?

A. It is very possible we may, and that upon several grounds; partly from a concern for the good of souls, who may be hurt, if these are not what they profess: partly from a kind of implicit envy at those who speak of higher attainments than our own: and partly from our natural slowness and unreadiness of heart to believe the works of God.

Q. Why may we not continue in the joy of faith, till we are *perfected in love*?

A. Why indeed? since holy grief does not quench this joy; since even while we are under the cross, while we deeply partake of the sufferings of Christ, we may rejoice with joy unspeakable.

9. At the conference in the year 1759, perceiving some danger that a diversity of sentiments should insensibly steal in among us, we again largely considered this doctrine. And soon after I published "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," prefaced with the following advertisement :—

"The following tract is by no means designed to gratify the curiosity of any man. It is not intended to prove the doctrine at large, in opposition to those who explode and ridicule it : no, nor to answer the numerous objections against it, which may be raised even by serious men. All I intend here, is simply to declare what are my sentiments on this head : what Christian perfection does, according to my apprehension, include, and what it does not ; and to add a few particular observations and directions relative to the subject.

"As these thoughts were at first thrown together by way of question and answer, I let them continue in the same form."

**Q.** What is Christian perfection ?

**A.** The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul : and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.

**Q.** Do you affirm, that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake ?

**A.** I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so.

**Q.** But how can every thought, word, and

work, be governed by pure love, and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake?

A. I see no contradiction here. "A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake." Indeed I do not expect to be freed from actual mistake, till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now *think* at all, but by the mediation of these bodily organs, which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes *thinking wrong*, till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.

But we may carry this thought farther yet. A mistake in judgment may possibly occasion a mistake in practice. For instance: Mr. De Renty's mistake, touching the nature of mortification, arising from prejudice of education, occasioned that practical mistake, his wearing an iron girdle. And a thousand such instances there may be, even in those who are in the highest state of grace. Yet where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a *sin*. However, it cannot bear the rigor of God's justice, but needs the atoning blood.

Q. What was the judgment of all our brethren who met at Bristol in August, 1758, on this head?

A. It was expressed in these words: 1. Every one may mistake as long as he lives: 2. A mis-

take in *opinion* may occasion a mistake in *practice* : 3. Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, 4. Every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. 5. It follows that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may say for themselves, as well as for their brethren, "Forgive us our trespasses."

This easily accounts for what might otherwise seem to be utterly unaccountable : namely, that those who are not offended when we speak of the highest degree of love, yet will not hear of living *without sin*. The reason is, they know all men are liable to mistake, and that in practice as well as in judgment. But they do not know, or do not observe, that this is not sin, if love is the sole principle of action.

Q. But still, if they live without sin, does not this exclude the necessity of a Mediator ? At least, is it not plain that they stand no longer in need of Christ in his priestly office ?

A. Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these : none so entirely depend upon him. For Christ does not give life to the soul separate from, but in and with himself. Hence his words are equally true of all men, in whatsoever state of grace they are, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me ; without" or separate from "me, ye can do nothing."

In every state we need Christ in the following respects: 1. Whatever grace we receive, it is a free gift from him: 2. We receive it as his purchase, merely in consideration of the price he paid: 3. We have this grace not only *from* Christ, but *in* him. For our perfection is not like that of a tree, which flourishes by the sap derived from its own root, but as was said before, like that of a branch, which united to the vine, bears fruit, but severed from it, *is dried up and withered*: 4. All our blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, depend on his intercession for us, which is one branch of his priestly office, whereof therefore we have always equal need: 5. The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office, to atone for their omissions, their short comings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet that they are not properly sins, we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law: for love is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii, 8-10. Now mistakes, and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the corruptible state of the body, are no way contrary to love, nor therefore in the Scripture sense, *sin*.

To explain myself a little farther on this head: 1. Not only *sin properly so called*, that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law, but sin improperly so called, that is, an involun-

tary transgression of a Divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life, as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. 3. Therefore *sinless perfection* is a phrase I never use, lest I should *seem* to contradict myself. 4. I believe a person filled with the love of God, is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. 5. Such transgressions you may call *sins*, if you please ; I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.

Q. What advice would you give to those that do, and those that do not call them so ?

A. Let those that do not call them *sins*, never think that themselves, or any other persons are in such a state, as that they can stand before infinite justice without a Mediator. This must argue either the deepest ignorance or the highest arrogance and presumption.

Let those who do call them so beware how they confound these *defects* with *sins*, properly so called. But how will they avoid it ? How will these be distinguished from those, if they are all promiscuously called *sins* ? I am much afraid, if we should allow any sins to be consistent with Christian perfection, few would confine the idea to those *defects* concerning which only the assertion could be true.

Q. But how can a liableness to mistake consist with perfect love ? 2. Is not a person who is perfected in love, every moment under its



influence? And can any mistake flow from pure love?

A. I answer, 1. Many mistakes may *consist* with pure love : 2. Some may accidentally flow from it. I mean, love itself may incline us to mistake. The pure love of our neighbor springing from the love of God, "thinketh no evil," "believeth and hopeth all things." Now this very temper, unsuspicious, ready to believe and hope the best of all men, may occasion our thinking some men better than they really are. Here there is a manifest mistake, accidentally *flowing* from pure love.

Q. How then shall we avoid setting Christian perfection too high or too low?

A. By keeping to the Bible, and setting it just as high as the Scripture does. It is nothing higher and nothing lower than this : the pure love of God and man : the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves : it is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.

Q. Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?

A. At first, perhaps, he would scarce be able to refrain, the fire would be so hot within him : his desire to declare the loving kindness of the Lord, carrying him away like a torrent. But afterward he might : and then it would be advisable not to speak of it to them that know not God. It is most likely it would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme nor to others

without some particular reason, without some good in view. And then he should have especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting ; to speak with the deepest humility and reverence, giving all the glory to God.

Q. But would it not be better to be entirely silent : not to speak of it at all ?

A. By silence he might avoid many crosses, which will naturally and necessarily ensue, if he simply declare, even among believers, what God has wrought in his soul. If therefore such a one were to confer with flesh and blood, he would be entirely silent. But this could not be done with a clear conscience ; for undoubtedly he ought to speak. *Men* do not light a candle to put it under a bushel : much less does the all-wise God. He does not raise such a monument of his power and love, to hide it from all mankind. Rather he intends it as a general blessing to those who are simple of heart. He designs thereby not barely the happiness of that individual person, but the animating and encouraging others to follow after the same blessing. His will is, *that many shall see it*, and rejoice, *and put their trust in the Lord*. Nor does any thing under heaven more quicken the desires of those who are justified, than to converse with those whom they believe to have experienced a still higher salvation. This places that salvation full in their view, and increases their hunger and thirst after it : an advantage which must have been entirely lost, had the person so saved buried himself in silence.

**Q.** But is there no way to prevent those crosses which usually fall on those who speak of being thus saved?

**A.** It seems they cannot be prevented altogether, while so much of nature remains even in believers. But something might be done, if the preacher in every place would, 1. Talk freely with all who speak thus: and, 2. Labor to prevent the unjust or unkind treatment of those in favor of whom there is reasonable proof.

**Q.** What is reasonable proof? How may we certainly know one that is saved from all sin?

**A.** We cannot *infallibly* know one that is thus saved, (no, nor even one that is justified,) unless it should please God to endow us with the miraculous discernment of spirits. But we apprehend these would be sufficient proofs to any reasonable man, and such as would leave little room to doubt either the truth or depth of the work: 1. If we had clear evidence of his exemplary behaviour, for some time before his supposed change. This would give us reason to believe he would not *lie for God*, but speak neither more nor less than he felt. 2. If he gave a distinct account of the time and manner wherein the change was wrought, with sound speech which could not be reproved; and, 3. If it appeared that all his subsequent words and actions were holy and unblamable.

The short of the matter is this: 1. I have abundant reason to believe this person will not lie. 2. He testifies before God, "I feel no sin,

but all love: I pray, rejoice, and give thanks without ceasing: and I have as clear an inward witness, that I am fully renewed, as that I am justified." Now, if I have nothing to oppose to this plain testimony, I ought in reason to believe it.

It avails nothing to object, "But I know several things wherein he is quite mistaken." For it has been allowed, that all who are in the body are liable to mistake: and that a mistake in judgment may sometimes occasion a mistake in practice: (though great care is to be taken, that no ill use be made of this concession.) For instance: even one that is perfected in love, may mistake with regard to another person, and may think him in a particular case, to be more or less faulty than he really is. And hence he may speak to him with more or less severity than the truth requires. And in this sense, (though that be not the primary meaning of St. James,) "In many things we offend all." This therefore is no proof at all that the person so speaking is not perfected in love.

Q. But is it not a proof if he is *surprised* or *fluttered* by a noise, a fall, or some sudden danger?

A. It is not: for one may start, tremble, change color, or be otherwise disordered in body, while the soul is calmly stayed in God, and remains in perfect peace. Nay, the mind itself may be deeply distressed, may be exceeding sorrowful, may be perplexed and pressed down by heaviness and anguish, even to agony, while

the heart cleaves to God by perfect love, and the will is wholly resigned to him. Was it not so with the Son of God himself? Does any child of man endure the distress, the anguish, the agony, which he sustained? And yet he "knew no sin."

**Q.** But can any who have a pure heart prefer pleasing to unpleasing food? Or use any pleasure of sense which is not strictly necessary? If so, how do they differ from others?

**A.** The difference between these and others in taking pleasant food is, 1. They need none of these things to make them happy; for they have a spring of happiness within. They see and love God—hence they "rejoice evermore, and in every thing give thanks." 2. They may *use* them, but they do not *seek* them. 3. They use them *sparingly*, and not for the sake of the thing itself. This being premised, we answer directly, such a one may use pleasing food, without the danger which attends those who are not saved from sin. He may prefer it to unpleasing, though equally wholesome food, as a means of increasing thankfulness, with a single eye to God, "who giveth us all things richly to enjoy." On the same principle, he may smell to a flower, or eat a bunch of grapes, or take any other pleasure which does not lessen but increase his delight in God. Therefore neither can we say, that one perfected in love would be incapable of marriage, and of worldly business: if he were called thereto, he would be more capable than ever; as being able to do

all things without hurry or carefulness, without any distraction of spirit.

Q. But what does the perfect one do more than others : more than common believers ?

A. Perhaps nothing : so may the providence of God have hedged him in, by outward circumstances. Perhaps not so much ; (though he desires and longs to *spend and be spent* for God :) at least not externally : he may neither speak so many words, nor do so many works. As neither did our Lord himself speak so many words, or do so many, no, nor so great works, as some of his apostles ; John xiv, 12. But this is no proof that he has not more grace.

Q. But is not *this* a proof against him : *I feel no power either in his words or prayer ?*

A. It is not : for perhaps that is your own fault. You are not likely to feel any power therein, if any of these hinderances lie in the way : 1. Your own *deadness* of soul. The dead Pharisees felt *no power* even in His words, who "spake as never man spake : " 2. The *guilt* of some unrepented sin lying upon the conscience : 3. *Prejudice* toward him of any kind : 4. Your not *believing* that state to be attainable, wherein he professes to be : 5. Believing it to be *ungodliness* to think or own he has attained it : 6. *Overvaluing or idolizing* him : 7. *Overvaluing yourself* and your own judgment. If any of these be the case, what wonder is it, that you feel no power in any thing he says ? But do not others feel it ? If they do, your argument falls to the ground. And if they do not, do none of these

hinderances lie in their way too? You must be certain of this, before you can build any argument thereon. And even then your argument will prove no more than that grace and gifts do not always go together.

“But he does not come up to *my idea* of a perfect Christian.” And perhaps no one ever did or ever will. For *your idea* may go *beyond*, or at least *beside* the Scriptural account. It may include *more* than the Bible includes therein, or however *something* which that does not include. Christian perfection is, pure love filling the heart and governing all the words and actions. If your idea includes any thing *more*, or any thing *else*, it is not Scriptural: and then no wonder that a Scripturally perfect Christian does not come up to it.

I fear many stumble on this stumbling block. They include as many ingredients as they please, not according to Scripture, but their own imagination, in their *idea* of one that is perfect in love; and then readily deny any one to be such, who does not answer that imaginary idea.

The more care should *we* take, to keep the simple, Scriptural account continually in our eye: pure love reigning alone in the heart and life, this is the whole of Christian perfection.

Q. When may a person judge himself to have attained this?

A. When, after having been fully convinced of inbred sin, by a far deeper and clearer conviction than that which he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a

gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin, and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to "rejoice evermore," to "pray without ceasing," and "in every thing to give thanks." Not that "to feel all love and no sin," is a sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time, before their souls were fully renewed. None, therefore, ought to believe that the work is done, till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as his justification.

**Q.** But whence is it that some imagine they are thus sanctified, when in reality they are not?

**A.** It is hence: they do not judge by *all* the preceding marks, but either by *part* of them or by *others*, that are ambiguous. But I know no instance of a person attending to them all, and yet deceived in this matter. I believe there can be none in the world. If a man be deeply and fully convinced, after justification, of inbred sin; if he then experience a gradual mortification of sin, and afterward an entire renewal in the image of God: if to this change, immensely greater than that wrought when he was justified, be added a clear, direct witness of the renewal: I judge it next to impossible this man should be deceived herein. And if one whom I know to be a man of veracity, testify these things to me, I ought not, without some sufficient reason, to reject his testimony.

**Q.** Is this death to sin, and renewal in love, gradual or instantaneous?



A. A man may be *dying* for some time ; yet he does not, properly speaking, *die*, till the instant the soul is separated from the body : and in that instant he lives the life of eternity. In like manner, he may be *dying to sin* for some time ; yet he is not *dead to sin*, until sin is separated from his soul. And in that instant he lives the full life of love. And as the change undergone when the body dies, is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any we had known before, yea, such as till then it is impossible to conceive ; so the change wrought when the soul dies to sin, is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any before, and than any can conceive till he experiences it. Yet he still grows in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God : and will do so, not only till death, but probably to all eternity.

Q. How are we to wait for this change ?

A. Not in careless indifference, or indolent inactivity ; but in vigorous universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily ; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way, (yea, or of *keeping* it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure,) he deceiveth his own soul. It is true we receive it by simple faith. But God does not, will not give that faith unless we seek it

with all diligence, in the way which he hath ordained.

This consideration may satisfy those who inquire why so few have received the blessing? Inquire, how many are seeking it in *this way*; and you have a sufficient answer.

Prayer especially is wanting. Who *continues instant* therein? Who *wrestles with God* for this very thing? *So ye have not, because ye ask not*: or because *ye ask amiss*, namely, "That you may be renewed *before you die*." Before you die! Will that content you? Nay, but ask, that it may be done *now*, to-day! While it is called to-day! Do not call this "setting God a time." Certainly *to-day is his time* as well as to-morrow. Make haste, man, make haste! Let

Thy soul break out in strong desire,  
The perfect bliss to prove!  
Thy longing heart be all on fire,  
To be dissolved in love!

Q. But may we continue in peace and joy, till we are perfect in love?

A. Certainly we may; for the kingdom of God is not divided against itself. Therefore, let not believers be discouraged from *rejoicing in the Lord always*. And yet we may be sensibly pained at the sinful nature that still remains in us. It is good for us to have a piercing sense of this, and a vehement desire to be delivered from it. But this should only incite us the more zealously to fly every moment to our strong helper, the more earnestly to "press

forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." And when the sense of our sin most abounds, the sense of his love should much more abound.

Q. How shall we treat those who think they have attained ?

A. Examine them candidly, and exhort them to pray fervently that God would show them all that is in their hearts. The most earnest exhortations to abound in every grace, and the strongest cautions to avoid all evil, are given throughout the New Testament, to those who are in the highest state of grace. But this should be done with the utmost tenderness, and without any harshness, sternness, or sourness. We should carefully avoid the very appearance of anger, unkindness, or contempt. Leave it to *Satan* thus to tempt, and to his children to cry out, *Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience.* If they are faithful to the grace given, they are in no danger of perishing by mistake: no, not if they remain in that mistake till their spirit is returning to God.

Q. But what hurt can it do to deal harshly with them ?

A. Either they are mistaken, or they are not. If they are not, it may destroy their souls. This is nothing impossible, no, nor improbable. It may so enrage or so discourage them, that they will sink, and rise no more. If they are not mistaken, it may grieve those whom God has not grieved, and do much hurt unto our own

souls. For undoubtedly he that toucheth them, toucheth as it were the apple of God's eye. If they are indeed full of his Spirit, to behave unkindly or contemptuously to them, is doing no little despite to the Spirit of grace. Hereby likewise we feed and increase in ourselves evil surmising, and many wrong tempers. To instance only one: What self-sufficiency is this, to set ourselves up for inquisitors-general, or peremptory judges in these deep things of God? Are we qualified for the office? Can we pronounce, in all cases, how far infirmity reaches? What may, and what may not be resolved into it? What may in all circumstances, and what may not consist with perfect love? Can we precisely determine how it will influence the look, the gesture, the tone of voice? If we can, doubtless we are *the men, and wisdom shall die with us.*

Q. But if they are displeased at our not believing them, is not this a full proof against them?

A. According as that displeasure is: if they are angry, it is a proof against them: if they are grieved, it is not. They ought to be grieved, if we disbelieve a real work of God, and thereby deprive ourselves of the advantage we might have received, from it. And we may easily mistake this grief for anger, as the outward expressions of both are much alike.

Q. But is it not well to *find out* those who fancy they have attained, when they have not?

A. It is well to do it by mild, loving examination. But it is not well to triumph even over

these. It is extremely wrong if we *find* such an instance, to rejoice as if we had found great spoils. Ought we not rather to grieve, to be deeply concerned, to let our eyes run down with tears? Here is one who *seemed* to be a living proof of God's power to *save to the uttermost*, but, alas! it is not as we hoped! He is "weighed in the balance and found wanting!" And is this matter of joy! Ought we not to rejoice a thousand times more, if we can find nothing but pure love?

"But he is deceived." What then? It is a harmless mistake, while he feels nothing but love in his heart. It is a mistake which generally argues great grace, a high degree both of holiness and happiness. This should be a matter of real joy to all that are simple of heart, not the mistake itself, but the height of grace which for a time occasions it. I rejoice that this soul is always happy in Christ, always full of prayer and thanksgiving. I rejoice that he feels no unholy temper, but the pure love of God continually. And I *will* rejoice, if sin is *suspended*, till it is totally *destroyed*.

Q. Is there no danger then in a man's being thus deceived?

A. Not at the time that he feels no sin. There was danger before, and there will be again, when he comes into fresh trials. But so long as he feels nothing but love animating all his thoughts, and words, and actions, he is in no danger: he is not only happy, but safe, "under the shadow of the Almighty." And for God's

sake, let him continue in that love as long as he can : mean time you may do well to warn him of the danger that *will be*, if his love grow cold and sin revive, even the danger of casting away hope, and supposing that because he hath not attained yet, therefore he never shall.

**Q.** But what if none hath attained it yet? What if all who think so are deceived?

**A.** Convince me of this, and I will preach it no more. But understand me right. I do not build any doctrine on this or that person. This or any other man may be deceived, and I am not moved. But if there be none made perfect in love yet, God has not sent me to preach Christian perfection.

Put a parallel case. For many years I have preached, "There is a peace of God which passeth all understanding." Convince me that this word has fallen to the ground : that in all these years none have attained this peace : that there is no living witness of it at this day, and I will preach it no more.

"O but several persons have died in that peace." Perhaps so : but I want living witnesses. I cannot indeed be infallibly certain, that this or that person is a witness. But if I were certain that there is none such, I should have done with this doctrine.

"You misunderstand me. I believe some who died in this love, enjoyed it long before their death. But I was not certain that their former testimony was true, till some hours before they died."

You had not an *infallible* certainty then And a *reasonable* certainty you might have had before: such a certainty as might have quickened and comforted your own soul, and answered all other Christian purposes. Such a certainty as this any candid person may have, suppose there be any living witness, by talking one hour with that person in the love and fear of God.

Q. But what does it signify, whether any have attained it or not, seeing so many scriptures witness for it?

A. If I were convinced that none in England had attained what has been so clearly and strongly preached by such a number of preachers, in so many places and for so long a time; I should be clearly convinced that we had all mistaken the meaning of those scriptures. And therefore for the time to come, I too should teach that "sin will remain till death."

I will here beg leave to add a few questions written by a plain man on this important subject.

"Queries, humbly proposed to those who deny Christian perfection to be attainable in this life.

1. Has not there been a *larger measure* of the Holy Spirit given under the Gospel, than under the Jewish dispensation? If not, in what sense was "the Spirit not given" before Christ was glorified? John vii, 39.

2. Was that "glory which followed the sufferings of Christ," 1 Pet. i, 11, an external glory, or an internal, viz. the glory of holiness?

3. Has God any where in Scripture *commanded* us more than he has *promised* to us?

4. Are the promises of God respecting holiness to be fulfilled *in this life*, or only *in the next*?

5. Is a Christian under any other laws than those which God promises *to write in our heart*? Jer. xxxi, 31, &c; Heb. iii, 10.

6. In what sense is "the righteousness of the law fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?" Rom. viii, 4.

7. Is it impossible for any one in this life to *love God with all his heart, and mind, and soul, and strength*? And is the Christian under any law which is not fulfilled in this love?

8. Does the soul's *going out of the body* effect its purification from indwelling sin?

9. If so, is it not something else, not the blood of Christ which cleanseth it from all sin?

10. If his blood cleanseth us from all sin while the soul and body are united, is it not *in this life*?

11. If when that union ceases, is it not *in the next*? And is not this too late?

12. If in the article of death; what situation is the soul in, when it is neither *in the body nor out of it*?

13. Did not St. Paul pray according to the will of God, when he prayed that the Thessalonians might be "sanctified wholly and preserved" (in this world, not the next, unless he was praying for the dead) "blameless in body, soul, and spirit, unto the coming of Jesus Christ?"



14. Do *you* sincerely *desire* to be freed from indwelling sin *in this life*?

15. If you do, did not God give you that desire?

16. If so, did he not give it you to mock you, since it is impossible it should ever be fulfilled?

17. If you have not sincerity enough even to desire it, are you not disputing about matters too high for you?

18. Do you ever pray God to *cleanse the thoughts of your heart, that you may perfectly love him*?

19. If you neither *desire* what you ask, nor *believe* it attainable, pray you not as a fool prayeth?

God help thee to consider these questions calmly and impartially!"

In the year 1768, the number of those who believed they were saved from sin, still increasing, I judged it needful to publish, chiefly for their use, "Farther thoughts on Christian Perfection:" which I will also adjoin.

Q. 1. How is "Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?" Rom. x, 4.

A. In order to understand this, you must understand what law is here spoken of. And this, I apprehend, is, 1. The Mosaic law, the whole Mosaic dispensation; which St. Paul continually speaks of as one, though containing three parts, the political, moral, and ceremonial: 2. The Adamic law, that given to Adam in innocence,

properly called "the law of works." This is in substance the same with the angelic law, being common to angels and man. It required that man should use to the glory of God all the powers with which he was created. Now he was created free from any defect, either in his understanding or his affections. His body was then no clog to the mind : it did not hinder his apprehending all things clearly, judging truly concerning them, and reasoning justly, if he reasoned at all. I say, *if he reasoned* ; for possibly he did not. Perhaps he had no need of reasoning till his corruptible body pressed down the mind, and impaired his native faculties. Perhaps till then, the mind saw every truth that offered, as directly as the eye now sees the light.

Consequently this law, proportioned to his original powers, required that he should always think, always speak, and always act precisely right, in every point whatever. He was well able to do so. And God could not but require the service he was able to pay.

But Adam fell ; and his incorruptible body became corruptible : and ever since it is a clog to the soul, and hinders its operations. Hence at present no child of man can at all times apprehend clearly or judge truly. And where either the judgment or apprehension is wrong, it is impossible to reason justly. Therefore it is as natural for a man to mistake as to breathe : and he can no more live without the one than without the other. Consequently no man is

able to perform the service which the Adamic law requires.

And as no man is obliged to perform it, God does not require it of any man. *For Christ is the end of the Adamic* as well as the *Mosaic law*. By his death he put an end to both: he hath abolished both the one and the other, with regard to man; and the obligation to observe either the one or the other is vanished away. Nor is any man living bound to observe the Adamic more than the Mosaic law.\*

In the room of this, Christ hath established another, namely, the law of faith. Not every one that doeth, but every one that believeth, now receiveth righteousness in the full sense of the word, that is, he is justified, sanctified, and glorified.

Q. 2. Are we then "dead to the law?"

A. We "are dead to the law by the body of Christ" given for us, Rom. vii, 4; to the Adamic as well as the Mosaic law. We are wholly freed therefrom by his death: that law expiring with him.

Q. 3. How then are we "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ?" 1 Cor. ix, 21.

A. We are without *that* law. But it does not follow that we are without any law. For God has established another law in its place, even the law of faith, and we are all under this law to God and to Christ. Both our Creator and our Redeemer require us to observe it.

\* I mean it is not the condition either of present or future salvation.

**Q. 4.** Is love the fulfilling of this law ?

**A.** Unquestionably it is. The whole law, under which we now are, is fulfilled by love, Rom. xiii, 9, 10. Faith working or animated by love, is all that God now requires of man—he has substituted (not sincerity, but) love, in the room of angelic perfection.

**Q. 5.** How is “love the end of the commandment?” 1 Tim. i, 5.

**A.** It is the end of every commandment of God. It is the point aimed at by the whole, and every part of the Christian institution. The foundation is faith, purifying the heart; the end love, preserving a good conscience.

**Q. 6.** What love is this ?

**A.** The *loving the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength*; and the *loving our neighbor*, every man as ourselves, as our own souls.

**Q. 7.** What are the fruits or properties of this love ?

**A.** St. Paul informs us at large, Love is long suffering. It suffers all the weakness of the children of God, all the wickedness of the children of the world. And that not for a little time only, but as long as God pleases. In all it sees the hand of God, and willingly submits thereto. Meantime it is *kind*. In all, and after all it suffers, it is soft, mild, tender, benign. “Love envieth not:” it excludes every kind and degree of envy out of the heart. “Love acteth not rashly,” in a violent, headlong manner, nor passes any rash or severe judgment. It “doth

not behave itself indecently,' it is not rude, does not act out of character: "seeketh not her own ease," pleasure, honor, or profit; "is not provoked:" expels all wrath from the heart: "thinketh no evil:" casteth out all jealousy, suspiciousness, and readiness to believe evil: "rejoiceth not in iniquity," yea, weeps at the sin or folly of its bitterest enemies: "but rejoiceth in the truth," in the holiness and happiness of every child of man. "Love covereth all things:" speaks evil of no man: "believeth all things" that tend to the advantage of another's character. "It hopeth all things:" whatever may extenuate the faults which cannot be denied: and it "endureth all things" which God can permit, or men and devils inflict. This is "the law of Christ," "the perfect law, the law of liberty."

And this distinction between the *law of faith*, (or love) and the *law of works*, is neither a subtle nor an unnecessary distinction. It is plain, easy, and intelligible to any common understanding. And it is absolutely necessary, to prevent a thousand doubts and fears, even in those who do *walk in love*.

Q. 8. But do "we" not "in many things offend all," yea, the best of us, even against this law?

A. In one sense we do not, while all our tempers, and thoughts, and words, and works spring from love. But in another we do, and shall do, more or less, as long as we remain in the body. For neither love nor the "unction

of the Holy One " makes us infallible. Therefore through unavoidable defect of understanding we cannot but mistake in many things. And these mistakes will frequently occasion something wrong, both in our temper, and words, and actions. From mistaking his character, we may love a person less than he really deserves. And by the same mistake we are unavoidably led to speak or act with regard to that person, in such a manner as is contrary to this law, in some or other of the preceding instances.

Q. 9. Do we not then need Christ, even on this account ?

A. The holiest of men still need Christ, as their prophet, as " the light of the world." For he does not give them light, but from moment to moment : the instant he withdraws, all is darkness. They still need Christ as their king. For God does not give them a stock of holiness. But unless they receive a supply every moment, nothing but unholiness would remain. They still need Christ as their priest, to make atonement for their holy things. Even perfect holiness is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ.

Q. 10. May not then the very best of men adopt the dying martyr's confession, " I am in myself *nothing but sin, darkness, hell* ; but thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven ?"

A. Not exactly. But the best of men may say, " Thou art my light, my holiness, my heaven. Through my union with thee, I am full of light, of holiness, and happiness. And if I

were left to myself, I should be nothing but sin, darkness, hell."

But to proceed. The best of men need Christ as their priest, their atonement, their advocate with the Father: not only as the continuance of their every blessing depends on his death and intercession, but on account of their coming short of the law of love. For every man living does so. You who *feel all love*, compare yourselves with the preceding description: weigh yourselves in this balance, and see if you are not wanting in many particulars.

Q. 11. But if all this be consistent with Christian perfection, that perfection is not freedom from all sin: seeing "sin is the transgression of the law." And the perfect in love transgress the very law they are under. Beside they need the atonement of Christ. And he is the atonement for nothing but sin. Is then the term *sinless perfection* proper?

A. I do not approve of the expression. But observe in what sense the person in question needs the atonement of Christ. They do not need him to reconcile them to God *afresh*; for they *are* reconciled. They do not need him to *restore* the favor of God, but to *continue* it. He does not procure pardon for them *anew*, but "ever liveth to make intercession for them." And "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. x, 14.

For want of duly considering this, some deny that they need the atonement of Christ. Indeed exceeding few: I do not remember to have

found five of them in England. Of the two, I would far sooner give up Christian perfection. But we need not give up either one or the other. The perfection I hold, *Love* "rejoicing evermore, 'praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks," is well consistent with it: if any hold a perfection which is not, they must look to it.

Q. 12. Does then Christian perfection imply any more than *sincerity*?

A. Not if you mean by that word, love filling the heart, expelling pride, wrath, evil desires, self-will: rejoicing ever more, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks. But I doubt few use *sincerity* in this sense. Therefore I think the old word is best.

A person may be *sincere*, who has all his natural tempers, pride, wrath, lust, self-will, in some degree. But he is not *perfect in love*, till his heart is cleansed from these, and all its other corruptions.

To clear this point a little farther: I know many that love God with all their heart. He is their one desire, their one delight, and they are continually happy in him. They love their neighbor as themselves. They feel as sincere, fervent, constant a desire for the happiness of every man, good or bad, friend or enemy, as for their own. They rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks. Their souls are continually streaming up to God in holy joy, prayer, and praise. This is a point of



fact. And this is plain, sound, Scriptural experience.

But even these souls dwell in a shattered body, and are so pressed down thereby that they cannot always exert themselves as they would by thinking, speaking, and acting *precisely right*. For want of better bodily organs, they must at times think, speak, or act wrong; not indeed through a defect of *love*, but through a defect of *knowledge*, and while this is the case, notwithstanding that defect and its consequences, they fulfil the law of love.

Yet as even in this case there is not a full conformity to the perfect law, so the most perfect in love do, on this very account, need the blood of atonement, and may properly for themselves, as well as for their brethren, say, "Forgive us our trespasses."

Q. 13. But if Christ has put an end to that law, what need of any atonement for their transgressing it?

A. Observe in what sense he has put an end to it, and the difficulty vanishes. Were it not for the *abiding merit* of his death, and his *continual intercession* for us, that law would condemn us still. These therefore we still need, for every transgression of it.

Q. 14. But can one that is saved from sin be tempted?

A. Yes; for *Christ was tempted*.

Q. 15. However, what you call temptation, I call the corruption of my heart. And how will you distinguish one from the other?

A. In some cases it is impossible to distinguish without the *direct witness* of the Spirit. But in general one may distinguish thus:—

One commends me. Here is a temptation to pride; but instantly my soul is humbled before God. And I feel no pride; of which I am as sure as that pride is not humility.

A man strikes me. Here is a temptation to anger. But my heart overflows with love; and I feel no anger at all; of which I am as sure as that love and anger are not the same.

A woman solicits me. Here is a temptation to lust. But in the instant I shrink back; and I feel no desire or lust at all; of which I am as sure as that my hand is cold or hot.

Thus it is, if I am tempted by a *present* object; and it is just the same, if when it is absent the devil recalls a commendation, an injury, or a woman to my mind. In the instant the soul repels the temptation, and remains filled with pure love.

And the difference is still plainer, when I compare my present state with my past, wherein I felt temptation and corruption too.

Q. 16. But how do you *know* that you are sanctified, saved from your inbred corruption?

A. I can know it no otherwise than I know that I am justified. *Hereby know we that we are of God*, in either sense, *by the Spirit that he hath given us*.

We know it by *the witness* and by *the fruit* of the Spirit. And first by *the witness*. As when we were justified, the *Spirit bore witness*

*with our spirit*, that our sins were forgiven; so when we were sanctified, he bore witness that they were taken away. Indeed, the witness of sanctification is not always clear at first, (as neither is that of justification :) neither is it afterward always the same, but, like that of justification, sometimes stronger and sometimes fainter. Yea, and sometimes it is withdrawn. Yet in general, the latter testimony of the Spirit is both as clear and as steady as the former.

Q. 17. But what need is there of it, seeing sanctification is a *real change*, not a *relative* only, like justification?

A. But is the new birth a *relative* change only? Is not this a *real* change? Therefore if we need no witness of our sanctification, because it is a *real* change, for the same reason we should need none that we are born of, or are the children of God.

Q. 18. But does not sanctification shine by its own light?

A. And does not the new birth too? Sometimes it does. And so does sanctification: ~~at~~ others it does not. In the hour of temptation Satan clouds the work of God, and injects various doubts and reasonings, especially in those who have either very weak or very strong understandings. At such times there is absolute need of that witness; without which the work of sanctification, not only could not be discerned, but could no longer subsist. Were it not for this, the soul could not then abide in the love of God: much less could it rejoice evermore, and

in every thing give thanks. In these circumstances, therefore, a *direct testimony* that we are sanctified, is necessary in the highest degree.

“ But I have no *witness* that I am saved from sin; and yet I have no doubt of it.” Very well. As long as you have no doubt, it is enough. When you have, you will need that *witness*.

Q. 19. But what scripture makes mention of any such thing, or gives any reason to expect it?

A. That scripture, 1 Cor. ii, 12: “ We have received not the spirit that is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are freely given us of God.”

Now surely sanctification is one of the *things which are freely given us of God*. And no possible reason can be assigned, why this should be excepted, when the apostle says, “ We receive the Spirit *for this very end*, that we know the things which are *thus* freely given us.”

Is not the same thing implied in that well known scripture, Rom. viii, 16, “ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Does he only witness this to those who are children of God in the lowest sense? Nay, but to those also who are such in the highest sense. And does he not witness that they *are such in the highest sense*? What reason have we to doubt it?

What if a man were to affirm (as indeed many do) that this witness belongs *only to the highest* class of Christians; would you not answer, the apostle makes no restriction? Therefore doubtless it belongs to all the children of

God. And will not the same answer hold if any affirm, that it belongs *only to the lowest class*?

Consider likewise, 1 John v, 19, "We know that we are of God." *How?* "By the Spirit that he hath given us," 1 John iii, 24. *Nay*, "hereby we know that he abideth in us." And what ground have we either from Scripture or reason, to exclude the witness any more than the fruit of the Spirit from being here intended? By this then also *we know that we are of God*, and *in what sense* we are so. Whether we are babes, young men, or fathers, we know in the same manner.

Not that I affirm, that all young men, or even fathers, have this testimony every moment: there may be intermissions of the direct testimony, that they are thus born of God. But those intermissions are fewer and shorter as they grow up in Christ. And some have the testimony both of their justification and sanctification, without any intermission at all: which I presume more might have, did they walk as humbly and as closely with God as they may.

Q. 20. May not some of these have a testimony from the Spirit, that they shall not finally fall from God?

A. They may. And this persuasion, that *neither life nor death shall separate them from him*, far from being hurtful, may in some circumstances be extremely useful. These therefore we should in no wise grieve, but earnestly encourage them to "hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end."

Q. 21. But have any a testimony from the Spirit that they shall *never sin*?

A. We know not that they have. Beside, we do not find any general state described in Scripture, from which a man cannot draw back to sin. If there were any state wherein this was impossible, it would be that of those who are *sanctified*, who are *fathers in Christ*, who *rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks*. But it is not impossible for these to draw back. They who are *sanctified*, may yet fall and perish, Heb. x. 29. Even *fathers in Christ* need that warning, "Love not the world," 1 John ii, 15. They who *rejoice, pray, and give thanks without ceasing*, may nevertheless "quench the Spirit," 1 Thess. v, 16, &c. Nay, even they who are "sealed unto the day of redemption," may yet "grieve the Holy Spirit of God," Eph. iv, 30.

Q. 22. By what *fruit of the Spirit* may we know that we are of God, in the highest sense?

A. By *love, joy, peace*, always abiding: by invariable *long suffering*, patience, resignation; by *gentleness*, triumphing over all provocation; by *goodness*, mildness, sweetness, tenderness of spirit; by *fidelity*, simplicity, godly sincerity; by *meekness*, calmness, evenness of spirit; by *temperance*, not only in food and sleep, but in all things natural and spiritual.

Q. 23. But what great matter is there in this? Have we not all this, when we are justified?

A. What! *Total resignation* to the will of God, without any mixture of self-will? *Gentle-*

ness, without any touch of anger, even the moment we are provoked? *Love* to God, without the least love to the creature, but in and for God, excluding *all* pride? Love to man, excluding *all* envy, *all* jealousy, and rash judging? *Meekness*, keeping the whole soul inviolably calm? And *temperance* in all things? Deny that any ever came up to this, if you please: but do not say all who are justified do.

Q. 24. But some who are newly justified do: what then will you say to these?

A. If they really do, I will say they are sanctified, saved from sin in that moment: and that they never need lose what God has given, or feel sin any more.

But certainly this is an exempt case. It is otherwise with the generality of those that are justified. They feel in themselves more or less pride, self-will, and a heart bent to backsliding. And till they have gradually mortified these, they are not fully renewed in love.

Q. 25. But is not this the case of all that are justified? Do they not *gradually* die to sin, and grow in grace, till at, or perhaps a little before death, God perfects them in love?

A. I believe this is the case of most, but not all. God usually gives a considerable *time*, for men to receive *light*, to grow in *grace*, to *do and suffer* his will, before they are either justified or sanctified. But he does not invariably adhere to this. Sometimes he cuts short his work. He does the work of many years in a few weeks: perhaps in a week, a day, an

hour. He justifies, or sanctifies, both those who have *done or suffered* nothing, and who have not had *time* for a gradual growth, either in *light or grace*. And may he not do what he will with his own? Is thine eye evil because he is good?

It need not, therefore, be affirmed over and over, and proved by forty texts of Scripture, either that most men are perfect in love at *last*, that there is a *gradual work* of God in the soul; or that, generally speaking, it is a *long time*, even many years, before sin is destroyed. All this we know. But we know, likewise, that God may, with man's good leave, *cut short his work*, in whatever degree he pleases, and do the usual work of many years in a moment. He does so in many instances. And yet there is a *gradual work* both *before* and *after* that moment. So that one may affirm the work is *gradual*; another, it is *instantaneous*, without any manner of contradiction.

Q. 26. Does St. Paul mean any more by being *sealed with the Spirit*, than being *renewed in love*?

A. Perhaps in one place, 2 Cor. i, 22, he does not mean so much. But in another, Eph. i, 13, he seems to include both the fruit and the witness: and in a higher degree than we experience, even when we are first *renewed in love*. God sealed us with the Spirit of promise, by giving us *full assurance of hope*; such a confidence of receiving all the promises of God, as excludes the possibility of doubting; with that



*Holy Spirit*, by universal holiness, stamping the whole image of God on our hearts.

Q. 27. But how can those who are thus sealed, grieve the *Holy Spirit of God*?

A. St. Paul tells you very particularly, 1. By such *conversation*, as is not profitable, not to the use of edifying; nor apt to minister grace to the hearers: 2. By relapsing into bitterness, or want of kindness: 3. By wrath, lasting displeasure, or want of tender-heartedness: 4. By anger, however soon it is over, want of instantly forgiving one another: 5. By clamor, or brawling, loud, harsh, rough speaking: 6. By evil speaking, whispering, tale bearing; needlessly mentioning the fault of an absent person, though in ever so soft a manner.

Q. 28. What do you think of those in London, who seem to have been lately renewed in love? \*

A. There is something very peculiar in the experience of the greater part of them. One would expect that a believer should first be filled with love, and thereby emptied of sin; whereas these were emptied of sin first, and then filled with love. Perhaps it pleased God to work in this manner, to make his work more plain and undeniable; and to distinguish it more clearly from that overflowing love, which is often felt even in a justified state.

It seems likewise most agreeable to that great

\* In the year 1763, when between three and four hundred in the society in London professed to be perfected in love.

promise, Ezek. xxxvi, 25, 26, "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

But I do not think of them all alike: there is a wide difference between some of them and others. I think most of them with whom I have spoken, have much faith, love, joy, and peace. Some of these, I believe, are renewed in love, and have the *direct witness* of it; and they manifest the fruit above described, in all their words and actions. Now let any man call this what he will. It is what I call Christian perfection.

But some who have much love, peace, and joy, yet have not the direct witness. And others who think they have, are nevertheless manifestly wanting in the fruit. How many I will not say: perhaps one in ten, perhaps more or fewer. But *some* are undeniably wanting in *long suffering* and Christian resignation. They do not see the hand of God in whatever occurs, and cheerfully embrace it. They do not in every thing give thanks, and rejoice evermore. They are not happy; at least, not *always* happy. For sometimes they *complain*. They say, "This or that is *hard*!"

Some are wanting in *gentleness*. They *resist evil* instead of turning the other cheek. They do not receive reproach with gentleness; no, nor even reproof. Nay, they are not able to bear contradiction, without the appearance, at least, of resentment. If they are reprov'd or

contradicted, though mildly, they do not take it well. They behave with more distance and reserve than they did before. If they are re-proved or contradicted harshly, they answer it with harshness ; with a loud voice, or with an angry tone, or in a sharp or surly manner. They speak sharply, or roughly, when they reprove others, and behave roughly to their inferiors.

Some are wanting in *goodness*. They are not kind, mild, sweet, amiable, soft, and loving at all times, in their spirit, in their words, in their looks and air, in the whole tenor of their behavior ; and that to all, high and low, rich and poor, without respect of persons ; particularly to them that are out of the way, to opposers, and to those of their own household. They do not long, study, endeavor by every means, to make all about them happy. They can see them uneasy, and not be concerned : perhaps they make them so. And then wipe their mouths, and say, " Why, they deserve it. It is their own fault."

Some are wanting in *fidelity*, a nice regard to truth, simplicity, and godly sincerity. Their love is hardly *without dissimulation* ; something like guile is found in their mouth. They are smooth to an excess, so as scarce to avoid a degree of fawning, or of seeming to mean what they do not.

Some are wanting in *meekness*, quietness of spirit, composure, evenness of temper. They are up and down, sometimes high, sometimes

low ; their mind is not well balanced. Their affections are either not in due proportion ; they have too much of one, too little of another : or they are not duly mixed and tempered together, so as to counterpoise each other. Hence there is often a jar. Their soul is out of tune, and cannot make the true harmony.

Some are wanting in *temperance*. They do not steadily use that kind and degree of food, which they know, or might know, would most conduce to the health, strength, and vigor of the body. Or they are not temperate in sleep : they do not rigorously adhere to what is best both for body and mind. Otherwise they would constantly go to bed and rise early, and at a fixed hour. Or they sup late, which is neither good for body nor soul. Or they use neither fasting nor abstinence. Or they prefer (which are so many sorts of intemperance) that preaching, reading, or conversation, which gives them a transient joy and comfort, before that which brings godly sorrow, or *instruction in righteousness*. Such joy is not sanctified. It doth not tend to and terminate in the crucifixion of the heart. Such faith doth not centre in God, but rather in itself.

So far all is plain. I believe you have faith, and love, and joy, and peace. You who are particularly concerned, know each for yourself, that you are wanting in the respect above mentioned. You are wanting either in long suffering, gentleness, or goodness ; either in fidelity, meekness, or temperance. Let us not then,

on either hand, fight about words. In the thing we clearly agree.

You have not what I call Christian perfection. However, hold fast what you have, and earnestly pray for what you have not.

Q. 29. Can those who are perfect in love, grow in grace?

A. Undoubtedly they can; and that not only while they are in the body, but probably to all eternity.

Q. 30. Can they fall from it?

A. I am well assured they can. Matter of fact puts this beyond dispute. Formerly we thought, one saved from sin could not fall. Now we know the contrary. Neither does any one stand by virtue of any thing that is implied in the *nature* of the state. There is no such *height* or *strength* of holiness as it is impossible to fall from. If there be any that *cannot fall*, this wholly depends on the promise and faithfulness of God.

Q. 31. Can those who fall from this state recover it?

A. Why not? We have instances of this also. Nay, it is an exceeding common thing, for persons to lose it more than once, before they are established therein.

It is therefore to guard them who are saved from sin, from every occasion of stumbling, that I give the following advice.

Q. 32. What is the first advice that you would give them?

A. Watch and pray continually against pride.

If God has cast it out, see that it enter no more : it is full as dangerous as evil desire ; and you may slide back into it unawares : especially if you think there is no danger of it. "Nay, but I ascribe all I have to God." So you may, and be proud nevertheless. For it is pride, not only to ascribe any thing we have to ourselves, but to think we have what we really have not. You ascribe all knowledge you have to God ; and in this respect you are humble. But if you think you have more than you really have ; or if you think you are so taught of God, as no longer to need man's teaching, pride lieth at the door.

Do not therefore say to any that would advise or reprove you, "You are blind ; you cannot teach me." Do not say this in your *wisdom*, your *carnal reason* ; but calmly weigh the thing before God.

Always remember, much grace does not imply much light. These do not always go together. As there may be much light where there is little love, so there may be much love where there is little light. The *heart* has more heat than the *eye* ; yet it cannot see ; and God has wisely tempered the members of the body together, that none may say to another, "I have no need of thee."

To imagine none can teach you but those who are themselves saved from sin, is a very great and dangerous mistake. Give not place to it for a moment. It will lead you into a thousand other mistakes, and that irrecoverably. No. *Dominion* is not *founded in grace*, as the

madmen of the last age talked. Obey and regard "them that are over you in the Lord," and do not think you know better than they. Know *their* place and *your own*: always remembering, much love does not imply much light.

The not observing this has led some into many mistakes, and into the appearance, at least, of pride. O beware of the appearance and the thing. Let there *be in you that lowly mind which was in Christ Jesus*. And *be ye likewise clothed with humility*. Let it not only fill, but cover you all over. Let modesty and self-diffidence appear in all your words and actions. Let all you speak and do show that you are little and base, and mean and vile, in your own eyes.

As one instance of this, be always ready to own any fault you have been in. If you have at any time thought, spoke, or acted wrong, be not backward to acknowledge it. Never dream that this will hurt the cause of God: no, it will further it. Be therefore open and frank when you are taxed with any thing: do not seek either to evade or disguise it; but let it appear just as it is, and you will thereby not hinder, but adorn the Gospel.

Q. 33. What is the second advice which you would give them?

A. Beware of that daughter of pride, *enthusiasm*! O keep at the utmost distance from it: give no place to a heated imagination. Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or

revelations to be from God. They may be from him; they may be from nature; they may be from the devil. Therefore, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." Try all things by the written word, and let all bow down before it. You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour if you depart ever so little from Scripture; yea, or from the plain literal meaning of any text, taken in connection with the context. And so you are, if you despise, or lightly esteem, reason, knowledge, or human learning; every one of which is an excellent gift of God, and may serve the noblest purposes.

I advise you never to use the words *wisdom*, *reason*, or *knowledge*, by way of reproach. On the contrary, pray that you yourself may abound in them more and more. If you mean *worldly* wisdom, *useless* knowledge, *false* reasoning, say so; and throw away the chaff, but not the wheat.

One general inlet to enthusiasm is, expecting the end without the means; the expecting knowledge, for instance, without searching the Scripture, and consulting the children of God: the expecting spiritual strength without constant prayer and steady watchfulness: the expecting any blessing without hearing the word of God at every opportunity.

Some have been ignorant of this device of Satan. They have left off searching the Scriptures. They said, "God writes all the Scripture on my heart, therefore I have no need to read it." Others thought they had not so much



need of hearing, and so grew slack in attending preaching. O take warning, you who are concerned herein. You have listened to the voice of a stranger. Fly back to Christ, and keep in the good old way, which was "once delivered to the saints."

The very desire of *growing in grace*, may sometimes be an inlet of enthusiasm. As it continually leads us to seek *new grace*, it may lead us unawares to seek something else new, beside *new degrees* of love to God and man. So it has led some to fancy they had received gifts of a *new kind*, after a new heart, as, 1, The loving God with all our mind; 2, with all our soul; 3, with all our strength; 4, oneness with God; 5, oneness with Christ; 6, having our lives hid with Christ in God; 7, being dead with Christ; 8, rising with him; 9, the sitting with him in heavenly places; 10, the being taken up into his throne; 11, the being in the New Jerusalem; 12, the seeing the tabernacle of God come down among men; 13, the being dead to all works; 14, the not being liable to death, pain, grief, or temptation.

One ground of many of these mistakes is, the taking every fresh, strong application of any of these scriptures to the heart, to be a gift of a *new kind*; not knowing that several of these scriptures are not fulfilled yet; that most of the others are fulfilled when we are justified; the rest the moment we are sanctified. It remains only to experience them in higher degrees. this is all we have to expect.

Another ground of these and a thousand mistakes is, the not considering deeply, that love is the highest gift of God ; humble, gentle, patient love ; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love ; and that all the gifts above mentioned are the same with, or infinitely inferior to it.

It were well you should be thoroughly sensible of this : the heaven of heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion : there is, in effect, nothing else. If you look for any thing but *more love*, you are looking wide of the mark ; you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others, have *you* received this or that blessing ? if you mean any thing but *more love*, you are wrong ; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham's bosom.

I say again, beware of *enthusiasm*. Such is the imagining you have the gift of prophesying, or of discerning of spirits, which I do not believe one of you has ; no, nor ever had yet. Beware of judging people to be either right or wrong, by your own feelings. This is no Scriptural way of judging. O keep close to the law, and to the testimony.

Q. 34. What is the third ?

A. Beware of *Antinomianism*, making void

*the law*, or any part of it, *through faith*. Enthusiasm generally leads to this: indeed, they scarce can be separated. This may steal upon you in a thousand forms, so that you cannot be too watchful against it. Take heed of every thing, whether in principle or practice, which has any tendency thereto. Even that great truth, that Christ is *the end of the law*, may betray us into it, if we do not consider that he has adopted every point of the moral law, and grafted it into the law of love. Beware of thinking, "Because I am filled with love, I need not have so much holiness: because I pray always, therefore I need not set time for private prayer: because I watch always, therefore I need no particular self-examination." Let us *magnify the law*, the whole written word, *and make it honorable*. Let this be our voice, *I prize thy commandments above gold or precious stones. O what love have I unto thy law. All the day long is my study in it!* Beware of *Antinomian books*. They contain many excellent things; and this makes them the more dangerous. O be warned in time! Do not play with fire; do not put your hand upon the hole of a cockatrice den. I entreat you beware of *bigotry*. Let not your love or beneficence be confined to Methodists (so called) only; much less to that very small part of them who seem to be renewed in love; or to those who believe yours and their report: O make not this your *Shibboleth!* Beware of *stillness: ceasing* in a wrong sense from your own works.

To mention one instance out of many: "You have received," says one, "a great blessing; but you began to talk of it, and to do this and that: so you lost it. You should have been still."

Beware of *self-indulgence*; yea, and making a virtue of it; laughing at *self-denial*, and taking up the cross daily; at fasting or abstinence. Beware of *censoriousness*, thinking or calling them that in any way oppose you, whether in judgment or practice, blind, dead, fallen, or "enemies to the work." Once more, beware of *Solifidianism*; crying nothing but "believe, believe;" and condemning those as ignorant or legal, who speak in a more spiritual way. At certain seasons, indeed, it may be right to speak of nothing but repentance, or merely faith, or altogether of holiness; but in general our call is to declare the whole counsel of God, and to prophesy according to the analogy of faith. The written word treats of the whole, and every particular branch of righteousness, descending to its minutest branches, as to be sober, courteous, diligent, patient, to honor all men. So likewise the Holy Spirit works the same in our hearts, not merely creating desires after holiness in general, but strongly inclining us to every particular grace, leading us to every individual part of *whatsoever is lovely*. And this with the greatest propriety: for as "by works faith is made perfect," so the completing or destroying the work of faith, and enjoying the favor, or suffering the displeasure of God,

greatly depends on every single act of obedience or disobedience.

Q. 35. What is the fourth ?

A. Beware of *sins of omission* : lose no opportunity of doing good in any kind. Be zealous of good works. Willingly omit no work, either of piety or mercy. Do all the good you possibly can to the bodies and souls of men ; particularly, " thou shalt in any wise reprove thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." Be *active*. Give no place to indolence or sloth : give no occasion to say, " You are idle, you are idle." Many will say so still ; but let your whole behavior refute the slander. Be always employed ; lose no shred of time : gather up the fragments, that none be lost : and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Be *slow to speak*, and wary in speaking. " In a multitude of words there wanteth not sin." Do not talk much, neither long at a time. Few can converse profitably above an hour. Keep at the utmost distance from pious chit-chat, from religious gossiping.

Q. 36. What is the fifth ?

A. Beware of *desiring* any thing but God. Now you desire nothing else. Every other desire is driven out ; see that none enter again. *Keep thyself pure, let your eye remain single, and your whole body shall be full of light.* Admit no desire of pleasing food, or any other pleasure of sense ; no desire of pleasing the eye, or the imagination, by any thing grand or new, or beautiful : no desire of money, of praise, or

esteem: of happiness in *any creature*. You *may* bring these desires back; but you need not: you need feel them no more. O stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.

Be patterns to all, of denying yourselves, and taking up your cross daily. Let them see that you make no account of any pleasure which does not bring you nearer to God; not regard any pain which does; that you simply aim at pleasing him, whether by doing or suffering: that the constant language of your heart, with regard to pleasure or pain, honor or dishonor, riches or poverty, is,

All 's alike to me, so I  
In my Lord may live and die!

Q. 37. What is the sixth?

A. Beware of *schism*: of making a rent in the church of Christ. That inward disunion, the members ceasing to have reciprocal love *one for another*, 1 Cor. xii, 25, is the very root of all contention, and every outward separation. Beware of every thing tending thereto. Beware of a dividing spirit: shun whatever has the least aspect that way. Therefore say not, "I am of Paul, or of Apollos;" the very thing which occasioned the schism at Corinth. Say not, this is *my* preacher, the *best* preacher in the land; give me him and take all the rest. All this tends to breed or foment division, to disunite those whom God hath joined. Do not run down any preacher. Do not exalt any one above the rest, lest you hurt both him and the cause of

God. On the other hand, do not bear hard upon any by reason of some incoherency or inaccuracy of expression ; no, nor for some mistakes, were they really such.

Likewise, if you would avoid schism, observe every *rule* of the *society*, and of the *bands*, for conscience' sake. Never omit meeting your class or band ; never absent yourself from any public meeting : these are the very sinews of our society ; and whatever weakens, or tends to weaken our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very roof of our community. As one saith, " That part of our economy, the private weekly meeting for prayer, examination, and particular exhortation, has been the greatest means of deepening and confirming every blessing that was received by the word preached, and of diffusing it to others who could not attend the public ministry—whereas, without this religious connection and intercourse, the most ardent attempts by mere preaching have proved of little lasting use."

Suffer not one thought of separating from your brethren, whether their opinions agree with yours or not. Do not dream that any man sins in not believing *you*, in not taking *your word* ; or that this or that *opinion* is essential to the work, and both must stand or fall together. Beware of *impatience of contradiction*. Do not condemn or think hardly of those who cannot see just as you see, or who judge it their duty to contradict you, whether in a great thing or a *small*. I fear some of us have thought hardly

of others, merely because they contradicted what we affirmed. All this tends to division, and by every thing of this kind we are teaching them an evil lesson against ourselves.

O beware of touchiness, not bearing to be spoken to, starting at the least word ; and flying from those who do not implicitly receive mine or another's sayings !

Expect contradiction and opposition, together with crosses of various kinds. Consider the words of St. Paul, "To you it is given in the behalf of Christ," for his sake, as a fruit of his death and intercession for you, "not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake," Phil. i, 29. *It is given !* God *gives* this opposition or reproach ; it is a fresh token of his love. And will you disown the Giver ? or spurn his gift, and count it a misfortune ? Will you not rather say, "Father, the hour is come that thou shouldst be glorified. Now thou givest thy child to suffer something for thee. Do with me according to thy will." Know that these things, far from being hinderances to the work of God, or to your soul, unless by your own fault, are not only unavoidable in the course of Providence, but profitable, yea, necessary for you. Therefore receive them from God (not from chance) with willingness, with thankfulness. Receive them from men with humility, meekness, yieldingness, gentleness, sweetness. Why should not even your outward *appearance* and *manner* be soft ? Remember the character of Lady Cutts : "It was said of the Roman em-



peror, Titus, 'never any one *came displeased from him*; but it might be said of her, never any one *went displeased to her*. So secure were all of the kind and favorable reception which they would meet with from her.

Beware of tempting others to separate from *you*. Give no offence which can possibly be avoided: see that your practice be in all things suitable to your profession, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. Be particularly careful in speaking of yourself; you may not indeed deny the work of God: but speak of it, when you are called thereto, in the most inoffensive manner possible. Avoid all magnificent pompous words. Indeed, you need give it no *general* name: neither "perfection, sanctification, the second blessing, nor the having attained." Rather speak of the particulars which God has wrought for you. You may say, "At such a time I felt a change which I am not able to express. And since that time I have not felt pride, or self-will, or wrath, or unbelief; nor any thing but a fullness of love to God and to all mankind." And answer any other plain question that is asked with modesty and simplicity.

And if any of you should at any time fall from what you now are, if you should again feel pride or unbelief, or any temper from which you are now delivered, do not deny, do not hide, do not disguise it at all, at the peril of your soul. At all events, go to one in whom you can confide, and speak just what you feel. God will enable *him* to speak a word in season, which shall be

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health to your soul. And surely the Lord will again lift up your head, and cause the bones that have been broken to rejoice.

Q. 38. What is the last advice that you would give them ?

A. Be *exemplary* in all things : particularly in outward things, (as in dress,) in little things, in the laying out of your *money*, (avoiding every needless expense,) in deep, steady seriousness, and in the solidity and usefulness of all your conversation. So shall you be "lights shining in a dark place:" so shall you daily grow in grace, till "an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Most of the preceding advices are strongly enforced in the following reflections, which I recommend to your deep and frequent consideration, next to the Holy Scriptures.

1. The sea is an excellent figure of the fulness of God and that of the blessed Spirit. For as the rivers all return into the sea ; so the bodies, the souls, and the good works of the righteous return into God, to live there in eternal repose.

Although all the graces of God depend on his mere bounty, yet he is pleased generally to attach them to the prayers, the instructions, and the holiness of those with whom we are. By strong, though invisible attractions, he draws some souls through their intercourse with others.

The sympathies formed by grace far surpass those formed by nature.

The truly devout show that passions as naturally flow from true as from false love, so deeply sensible are they of the good and evils of those whom they love for God's sake. But this can only be comprehended by those who understand the language of love.

The bottom of the soul may be in repose, even while we are in many outward troubles: just as the bottom of the sea is calm while the surface is strongly agitated.

2. *The best helps to grow in grace* are the ill usage, the affronts, and the losses which befall us. We should receive them with all thankfulness, as preferable to all others, were it only on this account, that our will has no part therein.

The readiest way to escape from our sufferings is, to be willing they should endure as long as God pleases.

If we suffer persecution and affliction in a right manner, we attain a larger measure of conformity to Christ by a due improvement of one of the occasions, than we could have done merely by imitating his mercy, in abundance of good works.

One of the greatest evidences of God's love to those that love him, is to send them afflictions, with grace to bear them.

Even in great afflictions, we ought to testify to God, that in receiving them from his hand, we feel pleasure in the midst of pain, from being afflicted by him who loves us, and whom we love.

The readiest way which God takes to draw a man to himself, is to afflict him in that he loves most, and with good reason ; and to cause this affliction to arise from some good action done with a single eye ; because nothing can more clearly show him the emptiness of what is most lovely and desirable in the world.

3. True *resignation* consists in a thorough conformity to the whole will of God ; who wills and does all (excepting sin) which comes to pass in the world. In order to this, we have only to embrace all events, good and bad, as his will.

In the greatest afflictions which can befall the just, either from heaven or earth, they remain immovable in peace, and perfectly submissive to God, by an inward, loving regard to him, uniting in one all the powers of their souls.

We ought quietly to suffer whatever befalls us, to bear the defects of others and our own, to confess them to God in secret prayer, or with groans which cannot be uttered ; but never to speak a sharp or peevish word, nor to murmur or repine.

Be thoroughly willing that God should treat you in the manner that pleases him. We are his lambs, and therefore ought to be ready to suffer, even to the death, without complaining.

We are to bear with those we cannot amend, and to be content with offering them to God. This is true resignation. And since he has borne our infirmities, we may well bear those of each other for his sake.

To abandon all, to strip one's self of all, in order to seek and to follow Jesus Christ, naked to Bethlehem, where he was born; naked to the hall, where he was scourged; and naked to Calvary, where he died on the cross, is so great a mercy, that neither the thing nor the knowledge of it is given to any, but through faith in the Son of God.

4. There is no love of God without patience, and no patience without *lowliness* and sweetness of spirit.

*Humility* and patience are the surest proof of the increase of love.

Humility alone unites patience with love, without which it is impossible to draw profit from suffering, or indeed to avoid complaint, especially when we think we have given no occasion for what men make us suffer.

True humility is a kind of self-annihilation; and this is the centre of all virtues.

A soul returned to God, ought to be attentive to every thing which is said to him, on the head of salvation, with a desire to profit thereby.

5. The bearing with men, and suffering evils in *meekness* and silence, is a grand part of a Christian life.

God is the first object of our love: its next office is to bear the defects of others. And we should begin the practice of this amidst our own household.

We should particularly exercise our love toward them who most shock either our way of *thinking*, or our temper, or our knowledge, or

the desire we have that others should be as virtuous as we wish to be ourselves.

6. On every occasion of uneasiness, we should retire to prayer, that we may give place to the grace and light of God: and then form our resolutions, without being in any pain about what success they may have.

God's command to "pray without ceasing," is founded on the necessity we have of his grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it than the body can without air.

Prayer continues in the desire of the heart, though the understanding be employed on outward things.

In souls filled with love the desire to please God is a constant prayer.

As the furious hate which the devil bears us is termed the roaring of the lion, so our vehement love may be termed crying after God.

7. It is scarce conceivable how *straight the way* is wherein God leads them that follow him; and how dependent on him we must be, unless we are wanting in our faithfulness to him.

It is hardly credible of how great consequence before God the smallest things are: and what great inconveniences sometimes follow those which appear to be light faults.

As a very little dust will disorder a clock, and the least sand will obscure our sight, so the least grain of sin, which is upon the heart, will hinder its right motion toward God.

We ought to be in the church as the saints

are in heaven, and in the house as the holiest men are in the church ; doing our work in the house as we pray in the church, worshipping God from the ground of the heart.

We should be continually laboring to cut off all the useless things that surround us. And God usually retrenches the superfluities of our souls, in the same proportion as we do those of our bodies.

The best means of resisting the devil is to destroy whatever of the world remains in us : in order to raise for God, upon its ruins, a building all of love. Then shall we begin, in this fleeting life, to love God as we shall love him in eternity.

We scarce conceive how easy it is to rob God of his due, in our friendship with the most virtuous persons, until they are torn from us by death. But if this loss produces lasting sorrow, that is a clear proof that we had before two treasures, between which we divided our heart.

8. If after having renounced all, we do not *watch* incessantly, and beseech God to accompany our vigilance with his, we shall be again entangled and overcome.

As the most dangerous winds may enter at little openings, so the devil never enters more dangerously than by little unobserved incidents, which seem to be nothing, yet insensibly open the heart to great temptations.

It is good to *examine closely* the state of our souls, as if we had never done it before. For *nothing* tends more to the full assurance of faith,

than to keep ourselves by this means in humility, and the exercise of all good works.

To continual watchfulness and prayer, ought to be added continual employment. For grace flies a vacuum as well as nature, and the devil fills whatever God does not fill.

There is no faithfulness like that which ought to be between a guide of souls, and the person directed by him. They ought continually to regard each other in God, and closely to examine themselves, whether all their thoughts are pure, and all their works directed with Christian discretion. Other affairs are only the things of men, but these are peculiarly the things of God.

9. The words of St. Paul, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," show us the necessity of eyeing God in our *good works*, and even in our minutest thoughts, knowing that none are pleasing to him but those which he forms in us and with us. From hence we learn that we cannot serve him unless we use our tongue, hands, and hearts, to do by his Spirit whatever he would have us do.

• If we were not utterly impotent, our good works would be our own property; whereas now they belong wholly to God, because they proceed from him and his grace; while raising our works, and making them all divine, he honors himself in us through them.

One of the principal rules of religion is, to lose no occasion of serving God. And since he is invisible to our eyes, we are to serve him in



our neighbor : which he receives as if done to himself in person standing visibly before us.

God does not love men that are inconstant. Nothing is pleasing to him but what has a resemblance of his own immutability.

A constant attention to the work which God intrusts us with, is a mark of solid piety.

Love fasts when it can, and as much as it can, consistent with health. It leads to all the ordinances of God, and employs itself in all the outward works, whereof it is capable. It flies as it were, like Elijah, over the plain, to find God upon his holy mountain.

God is so great that he communicates greatness to the least thing that is done for his service.

Happy are they who are sick ; yea, or lose their life for having done a good work.

God frequently conceals the part which his children have in the conversion of other souls. Yet one may boldly say, that person who long groans before him for the conversion of another, whenever that soul is converted to God, is one of the chief causes of it.

Charity cannot be practised right, unless, first, we exercise it the moment God gives the occasion ; and then offer it to God by humble thanksgiving ; and this for three reasons, first, To render to him what we have received from him : 2dly, To avoid the dangerous temptation which springs from the very goodness of these works : and, hirdly, To unite ourselves to God in whom the soul expands itself in prayer, with

all the graces we have received, and the good works we have done, to draw from him new strength against the bad effects which these very works may produce in us, if we do not make use of the antidotes which God has ordained against them. The true means to be filled anew with the riches of grace, is thus to strip ourselves of it ; and without this, it is extremely difficult not to grow faint in the practice of good works.

Good works do not receive their last perfection till they, as it were, lose themselves in God. This is a kind of death to them, resembling that of our bodies, which will not attain their highest life, their immortality, till they lose themselves in the glory of our souls, or rather of God, wherewith they shall be filled. And it is only what they had of earthly and mortal, which good works lose by this spiritual death.

Fire is the symbol of love ; and the love of God is the principle and the end of all our good works : but as truth surpasses figure, the fire of divine love has this advantage over material fire, that it can re-ascend to its source, and raise thither with it all the good works which it produces : and by this means it prevents their being corrupted by pride, vanity, or any evil mixture. But this cannot be done otherwise than by making these good works in a spiritual manner die in God, by a deep gratitude, which plunges the soul in him as in an abyss ; with all that it is, and all the grace and works for which it is indebted to him : a gratitude whereby ~~the~~

soul seems to empty itself of them, that they may return to their source, as rivers seem willing to empty themselves, when they pour themselves with all their waters into the sea.

When we have received any favor from God, we ought to retire, if not into our closets, into our hearts, and say, "I come, Lord, to restore to thee what thou hast given, and I freely relinquish it to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or in earth in thy presence, but a void capable of being filled with thee; and by thee, as the air which is void and dark is capable of being filled with the light of the sun? Grant, therefore, O Lord, that I may never appropriate thy grace to myself any more than the air appropriates to itself the light of the sun, which withdraws it every day to restore it the next, there being nothing in the air that either appropriates its light or resists it. O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring thy grace and good works! I say thine; for I acknowledge the root from which they spring is in thee, not in me."

In the year 1764, upon a review of the whole subject, I wrote down the sum of what I had observed, in the following short propositions:—

1. "There is such a thing as *Christian perfection*, for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture."

2. It is not so early as justification: for justified persons are to "go on to perfection," *Heb. vi. 1.*

3. It is not so late as death ; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect, Phil. iii, 15.

4. It is not *absolute*. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels ; but to God alone.

5. It does not make a man *infallible* ; none is infallible while he remains in the body.

6. It is *perfect love*, 1 John iv, 18. This is the *essence* of it : its *properties*, or inseparable fruits, are *rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks*, 1 Thess. v, 16, &c.

7. It is *improvable*. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.

8. It is *amissible*, capable of being lost ; of which we have had instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this for several years.

9. It is constantly both preceded and followed by a *gradual* work.

10. But is it in itself instantaneous, or not ? In examining this, let us go on step by step.

An *instantaneous change* has been wrought in some believers : none can deny this, who are acquainted with experimental religion.

Since that change they enjoy *perfect love*. They feel this, and this alone : they rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks. Now this is all that I mean by Christian perfection : therefore these are witnesses of the perfection which I preach.

"But in some this change was not instantaneous:" they did not perceive the instant when it was wrought. It is often difficult to perceive the instant when a man dies, yet there is an instant in which life ceases; and if ever sin ceases, there must be a last moment of its existence, and a first moment of our deliverance from it.

"But if they have this love now, they will lose it." They may, but they need not. And whether they do or no, they have it now; they now experience what we teach; they now are *all love*; they *now* rejoice, pray, and praise without ceasing.

"However, sin is only *suspended* in them, it is not *destroyed*." *Call* it what you please. They are *all love* to-day, and they take no thought for to-morrow.

"But this doctrine has been much abused." So has that of justification by faith. But that is no reason for giving up either this or any other Scriptural doctrine. When you wash your child, as one speaks, "throw away the water, but do not throw away the child."

"But those who think they are saved from sin, say they have no need of the merits of Christ;"—they say just the contrary. Their language is,

Every moment, Lord, I want  
The merit of thy death!

They never before had so deep, so unspeakable a conviction of the need of Christ in all his *offices*, as they have now.

Therefore, all our preachers should make a point of *preaching Christian perfection* to believers, constantly, strongly, and explicitly.

And all believers should *mind this one thing*, and continually agonize for it.

I have now done what I proposed. I have given a plain and simple account of the doctrine of Christian perfection. I have declared the whole and every part of what I mean by that Scriptural expression. I have drawn the picture of it at full length, without either disguise or covering. And remember, this is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Those are his words, not mine: ΕΣΕΤΕ ΟΥΝ ΟΜΕΙΣ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΙ ΟΣΠΕΡ Ο ΠΑΤΕΡ ΟΜΟΝ Ο ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΟΙΣ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ ΕΣΤΙ.—“Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” And who says ye shall not? Or at least, not till your soul is separated from the body? It is the doctrine of St. Paul, the doctrine of St. James, of St. Peter, and St. John. It is the doctrine of every one who preaches the pure and the whole Gospel. Look at it again; survey it on every side, and that with the closest attention: in one view it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving God all our heart: it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward, as well as outward pollution. It is a

renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of him that created it. In yet another, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Now, let this *Christian perfection* appear in its native form, and who can speak one word against it? Will any dare to speak against loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves? Against a renewal of heart, not only in part, but in the whole image of God? Who is he that will open his mouth against being cleansed from all pollution, both of flesh and spirit? Or against having all the mind that was in Christ, and walking in all things as Christ walked? What man who calls himself a Christian, has the hardiness to object to the devoting not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God? What serious man would oppose the giving God all our heart, and the having one desire ruling all our tempers? I say again, let this Christian perfection appear in its own shape, and who will fight against it? It must be *disguised* before it can be *opposed*. It must be *covered* with a bear skin first, or even the wild beasts of the people will scarce be induced to *worry* it. But whatever these do, let not the children of God any longer fight against the image of God. Let not the members of Christ say any thing against the whole mind that was in Christ. Let not those who are alive to God oppose the dedicating all our life to him. Why should *you*, who have his *love* shed abroad in your heart, withstand the

giving him all your heart? Does not all that is within you cry out, "O who that loves, can love enough?" What pity that those who desire and design to please him, should have any other design or desire! much more that they should dread, as a fatal delusion, yea, abhor, as an abomination to God, the having this one desire and design, ruling every temper. Why should devout men be afraid of devoting all their soul, body, and substance to God? Why should those who love Christ, count it a damnable error, to think we may have all the mind that was in him? We allow, we contend, that we are *justified freely*, through the righteousness and the blood of Christ. And why are you so hot against us, because we expect likewise to be *sanctified wholly* through his Spirit? We look for no favor either from the open servants of sin, or from those who have only the form of religion. But how long will you, who worship God in spirit, who are "circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands," set your battle in array against those who seek an entire *circumcision of heart*, who thirst to be cleansed *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*? Are we your enemies, because we look for a full deliverance from the *carnal mind which is enmity against God*? Nay, we are your brethren, your fellow laborers in the vineyard of our Lord, your companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus. Although this we confess, (if we are fools therein, yet as fools bear with us,) we



expect to love God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. Yea, we do believe that he will in this world so "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that we shall perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name."

THE END.

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